

HOW TO KNOW THE WILL OF GOD

DECISION MAKING IN ACTS



WAYNE O'DONNELL

How to Know the Will of God Decision Making in Acts

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To

Garry Friesen

for his book

Decision Making and the Will of God:

A Biblical Alternative to the Traditional View

Contents

[Contents](#)

[Tables](#)

[Quotes \(Excluding Appendix\)](#)

[Introduction](#)

[Geography](#)

[Acts 1:1-6:7. Jerusalem](#)

[Acts 1:9-14. Waiting in Jerusalem](#)

[Acts 1:15-23. Matthias](#)

[Acts 1:24-26. Casting Lots](#)

[Inward Impressions](#)

[Fleeces and Bible Roulette](#)

[Logic](#)

[Acts 4:1-31. When To Disobey Authorities](#)

[Acts 6:1-7. The First Deacons](#)

[Acts 6:8-8:4. Judaea and Samaria](#)

[Acts 9:32-35. Peter at Lydda and Joppa](#)

[Acts 10:1-12:24. God-Fearing Gentiles](#)

[Acts 10:1-11:18. Peter and Cornelius](#)

[Acts 11:28-30. Antioch Syria's Gift for Jerusalem](#)

[Acts 12:4-12:19. Peter's Deliverance from Prison](#)

[Acts 12:25-14:28. Galatia](#)

[Acts 13:1-2 \(Antioch Syria\). 1\) Go!](#)

[Acts 13:2-3 \(Antioch Syria\). 2\) Work with Others](#)

[Acts 13:4 \(Cyprus\). 3\) Start at Home](#)

[Acts 13:5a \(Cyprus\). 4\) To the Jew First](#)
[Acts 13:5b-13 \(Cyprus\). 5\) On-the-Job Training](#)
[Call to the Ministry?](#)
[Acts 13:14 \(Antioch Galatia\). 6\) New Territory](#)
[Acts 13:14 \(Antioch Galatia\). 7\) Contiguous Territory](#)
[Acts 13:14 \(Antioch Galatia\). 8\) Focus on Cities](#)
[Acts 13:50-52 \(Antioch Galatia\). 9\) Flee Persecution](#)
[Acts 14:13-21a \(Lystra\). 10\) Preach!](#)
[Acts 14:21c-22 \(Galatia\). 11\) Defense Before Offense](#)
[Acts 14:23 \(Galatia\). 12\) Plant Congregations](#)
[Acts 14:26-28 \(To Antioch Syria\). 13\) Keep in Touch](#)
[Acts 15:1-35. The Situation in Antioch Syria](#)
[Acts 15:36-18:18. Corinth](#)
[Acts 16:12-15 \(Philippi\). 14\) Baptize!](#)
[Acts 16:15 \(Philippi\). 15\) Meet With the Brethren](#)
[Acts 16:16-24. Forbidden Forms of Seeking Guidance](#)
[Acts 17:1-34. Thessalonica to Corinth](#)
[Acts 18:11 \(Corinth\). 16\) Teach!](#)
[Acts 18:19-19:20. Ephesus](#)
[Acts 18:19-19:1. Ephesus to Jerusalem to Ephesus](#)
[Acts 19:8-10. Preaching in the School of Tyrannus](#)
[Acts 19:11-20. Miracles and Magic](#)
[Acts 19:20. Asian \[Eph+\] Imprisonment](#)
[Acts 19:20. Epistle of Philippians](#)
[Acts 19:20. Epistle of 1 Corinthians](#)
[Acts 19:20. Second Visit to Corinth](#)
[Acts 19:20. Epistle of 1 Timothy](#)
[Acts 19:20. Epistle of Titus](#)

[Acts 19:21-21:17. Going Up to Jerusalem](#)

[Acts 19:21. Paul's Decision to Go Up to Jerusalem](#)

[Acts 19:21-20:1. The Collection for the Saints](#)

[Acts 20:2a. Epistle of 2 Corinthians](#)

[Acts 20:3a. Epistle of Romans](#)

[Acts 20:3b \(Corinth\). 17\) Make Wise Flexible Plans](#)

[Acts 20:4. The Messengers \(Apostles\) of the Congregations](#)

[Acts 20:6a. Passover in Philippi](#)

[Acts 20:5. Luke Rejoins Paul at Philippi](#)

[Acts 20:13-14. Paul's Gethsemane](#)

[Acts 20:15-38. Farewell Speech to the Ephesian Elders](#)

[Acts 28:1-6. Circumstances](#)

[Applying the Word with Wisdom](#)

[Choosing Between Job Offers](#)

[Frameworks for Discerning God's Will](#)

[Career Choices](#)

[Marriage Choices](#)

[Conclusion](#)

[Scripture Index](#)

[Bibliography](#)

Introduction

All my books can be read online for free at <http://wayneodonnell.com>. "Freely you have received, freely give" (Mt. 10:8). This booklet is included in and comprises several sections in my book "Paul's Decision Making in Acts: Anti-Charismatic Pro-Jewish Commentary on Acts."

In 1980, Garry Friesen wrote "Decision Making and the Will of God," a book that debunked the traditional view that God leads by inward impressions into His perfect, specific will. But Bible teachers continue teach prayer is a two-way conversation; churches continue to question pastoral candidates about their 'call' to the ministry; and Christians continue to try to discern God's inner voice to make decisions.

Maybe it would help if we had more scholarly journal articles on the topic.

Grudem. I ... categorized the articles published in three refereed evangelical journals for the last five years [before 2000]: Westminster Theological Journal, ... Trinity Journal, ... and ... the Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society. Not counting book reviews, there were 257 scholarly articles [on all topics]. ... [But regarding] God's guidance in our daily lives. Zero articles. Yet some understanding of God's guidance affects every Christian every day of his or her life! ... Either Garry Friesen is right on that topic, or he's wrong. ... We should expect to see many more scholars contributing articles and books supporting and developing their viewpoints.¹

Christians in the book of Acts made their decisions by the Word and Wisdom, not by listening for inward impressions. I would love to read an exposition of the Book of Acts that showed Paul, the other apostles, and their co-workers, making most of their decisions by listening for inward impressions, but it would require reading that doctrine into the text, rather than expositing it out of the text.

Friesen. In order to arrive at the conclusion of the traditional approach [to decision-making], it is necessary to water down the biblical examples and spice up the biblical teaching. Examples [like in Acts] are watered down to be less miraculous than they really are [so we can think we're doing them too]. Biblical teaching [like in the epistles] must be spiced up to be more specific than it really is [for example, a promise to Israel to "guide you continually" (Is. 58:11), doesn't actually say anything about Christians being guided by 'inward impressions']²

Paul made most of his decisions by the Word and Wisdom, not by inward impressions, and only rarely by direct revelation, even though he was the apostle on the cutting-edge of Jesus' mission to bring the gospel to the Gentiles. Most of Paul's decisions in Acts can be explained by the following 17 principles.

PAUL'S 17 MISSION STRATEGIES

1. Go!
2. Work with Others
3. Start At Home
4. To the Jew First
5. On-the-Job Training
6. New Territory
7. Contiguous Territory
8. Focus On Cities

9. Flee Persecution
10. Preach!
11. Defense Before Offense
12. Plant Congregations
13. Keep in Touch
14. Baptize!
15. Meet With the Brethren
16. Teach!
17. Make Wise Flexible Plans

I recommend the following additional books about decision-making by the Word and Wisdom.

1743, Benjamin Doolittle, *An Enquiry into Enthusiasm*.

1980, Garry Friesen, *Decision Making and the Will of God*.

1988, Arthur L. Johnson, *Faith Misguided: Exposing the Dangers of Mysticism*.

1995, Bruce K. Waltke, *Finding the Will of God: A Pagan Notion?*

1998, John MacArthur Jr., *Found: God's Will*. (Originally, 1973, *God's Will Is Not Lost*.)

2003, Dave Swavely, *Decisions, Decisions: How (and How Not) to Make Them*.

All Bible quotations are from the King James Version, unless otherwise noted, but I've modernized the English. The word "Christ" has been consistently changed to "Messiah," since no one knows what a "Christ" is, except for its unfortunate religious overtones, but everyone knows what a "Messiah"

is, and both are transliterations of the Greek and Hebrew word meaning “anointed.” So much false Catholic and Reformed doctrine regarding Israel would have been avoided over the centuries if the KJV translators had chosen to use “Messiah” instead of “Christ.” The cover image is a photograph of the remains of a bath house in ancient Troas.

Geography

The three most important geographical terms to understand in Acts are Asia, Achaia, and Macedonia, the regions surrounding the Aegean.

Asia means the Roman province of Asia on the east side of the Aegean, where Ephesus is, i.e., the west coast of Asia Minor (modern Turkey), and not something like India or China, as we think of Asia today.

Achaia means the region of Southern Greece on the west side of the Aegean, where Corinth is.

Macedonia means the region of Northern Greece on the north end of the Aegean, where Philippi and Thessalonica are.

The island of Crete is at the south end of the Aegean, and Paul ministered there also.

As a reminder of the meaning of these three regions, I'll always show them like: Asia (Eph+), Achaia (Cor+), and Macedonia (Phil/Thess+).

Also note there are two Antiochs in Acts.

Antioch in Syria was the main city of the Congregation outside Jerusalem for many years, which I'll call Antioch Syria.

Antioch in Galatia (the Roman province, not the ethnic area), was a missionary outreach of Paul, which I'll call Antioch Galatia.

Acts 1:1-6:7. Jerusalem

Acts 1:9-14. Waiting in Jerusalem

When Jesus was with the apostles, they didn't have to make many decisions. But now ...

Acts 1:9-10. While they watched, he was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, which also said, "You men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven?"

Now what should they do?

The first decision was easy. Jesus had told them to wait in Jerusalem until he gave them the Holy Spirit. They had a clear command, that clearly applied to them, and they obeyed it.

The Word. Acts 1:3-5. He ... commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the [gift from the] Father, ... "for, [he said,] ... you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

And Wisdom. Acts 1:12-14. They returned to Jerusalem, and ... went up to an upper room, where abode ... all ... with one accord in prayer.

Acts 1:15-23. Matthias

Jesus had told the apostles to wait in Jerusalem until they received the Spirit. They did stay in Jerusalem, but they did more than wait. Peter decided they should choose a replacement for Judas, who had committed suicide after betraying the Messiah. He based this decision on a partial misinterpretation of the Word.

The Word. Ps. 109:5-8. They have rewarded me evil for good, and hatred for my love. ... Let his days be few, and let another take his office.

Jn. 15:26-27. You ... will bear witness because you have been with me from the beginning.

Not Wisdom. And in those days Peter stood up in the middle of the disciples, and said, ... "Of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John, to that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection.

Peter based his decision on Psalm 109 and Jesus words of John 15. Peter was correct that Psalm 109 says Judas will be replaced, but it doesn't say the apostles should appoint his replacement.

Jesus had given the apostles a lot of authority in the Congregation. "Whatever you will bind on earth will be bound in heaven; and whatever you will loose on earth will be loosed in heaven," Mt. 16:19. But he never gave them authority to choose another apostle to represent him.

Would you be happy if I chose a representative for you? Even in secular life, no one has the authority to choose a representative for someone else. For example, if you name a trustee to administer your estate after you die, and he

decides he doesn't want to serve, even he doesn't have the authority to appoint a replacement, unless that's explicitly stated in the trust document. If you didn't name a backup trustee, the courts will have to appoint a successor.

All human authority is limited to what God designates, and anything beyond that is a misuse of authority, and not binding on anyone; like when a pastor claims authority to determine who each person must marry, the way cults like Sun Myung Moon's do.

Perhaps Peter thought they needed to find a replacement for Judas before the gift of the Holy Spirit was given, so he could be a participant in that event. But if Jesus had wanted a replacement for Judas before Pentecost, he would have chosen one during the "forty days" he had just spent with "the apostles whom he had chosen" (Acts 1:2-3).

Peter also misinterpreted Jesus words of John 15, in thinking they meant an apostle had to have been with Jesus from the baptism of John until the ascension. Matthew wasn't called to follow Jesus until Matthew 9. And I doubt either candidate, Joseph or Matthias, was in the boat the night Jesus walked on the water. Certainly neither supposed candidate was a witnesses of the transfiguration, or the healing of Jairus' daughter, or Jesus' praying in Gethsemane, which only Peter, James, and John witnessed. And probably neither Joseph or Matthias was even at the Passover meal when Jesus said "you ... shall bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning," Jn. 15:26-27. In saying an apostle of Jesus needed to have been with him from the baptism of John to the ascension, Peter was adding to the words of Jesus, even as Eve added to the commandment regarding the tree of knowledge, "You shall not eat of it [true], neither shall you touch it [wise behavior, but an addition to God's words]" (Gen. 3:3).

Peter even indicated he knew the forty days after the resurrection was what really mattered. “One must be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection,” Acts 1:22.

Acts 4:34. With great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

Acts 10:40-41. God raised up [Jesus] the third day, and showed him openly; not to all the people, but to witnesses chosen before God; even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead.

Based on the criteria of being a witness of Jesus during the forty days after his resurrection, a lot more men qualified as prospective replacements for Judas than just “two, Joseph ... and Matthias” (Acts 1:23).

1 Cor. 15:6. He was seen by above five hundred brethren at once.

Peter probably thought that after Jesus was “taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight” (Acts 1:9), he wouldn’t return until, “this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as you have seen him go into heaven” (Acts 1:11). Peter had no way to know Jesus would return to earth a few years later to personally choose Paul to be his apostle, saying “I send [ἀποστέλλω, apostello, apostle] you,” Acts 26:17. Paul was the last person to see the resurrected Jesus bodily, not in a vision.

1 Cor. 15:6. He was seen of above five hundred brethren at once, ... and last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.

Ananias saw Jesus in a vision. “The Lord said in a vision, ‘Ananias,’” (Acts 9:10). But Paul witnessed the resurrected Jesus himself. “Barnabas ... brought [Paul] to the apostles, and declared to them how he had seen the Lord in the way,” Acts 9:27.

We have the benefit of hindsight, and the indwelling Holy Spirit, which the apostles didn’t have when they chose Matthias. Would Peter have suggested choosing a replacement for Judas if he had known ahead of time Jesus would later return to personally choose Paul as an apostle of Jesus Messiah?

The word “apostle” is the transliteration of the Greek word “apostolos,” meaning messenger or representative. Some men in the New Testament were called apostles because they were “messengers [ἀπόστολοι, apostoloi] of the Congregations” (2 Cor. 8:23). For example, Barnabas was called an apostle in Acts 14:14, “the apostles, Barnabas and Paul,” because both he and Paul were apostles of the Congregation of Antioch Syria.

Acts 13:1-3. Separate to me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when ... they [the Congregation of Antioch Syria] ... laid their hands on them, they sent them away [as their representatives, or apostoloi, apostles].

But Paul was also “an apostle of Jesus Messiah” (1 Cor. 1:1, 2 Cor. 1:1, Eph. 1:1, Col. 1:1, 1 Tim. 1:1, 2 Tim. 1:1, Titus 1:1, 1 Pet. 1:1, 2 Pet. 1:1).

Peter was like Abraham, who took Hagar as a concubine because he didn’t know God would someday miraculously give Sarah, his aged wife, a son. Abraham’s impatience caused much trouble to Sarah’s descendants, the Jewish

people, because of Hagar's descendants, the Arabs. Likewise, Peter's impatience caused much trouble to the apostle Paul, because of Matthias.

Paul constantly had to defend his apostleship. He said he was ...

Gal. 1:1. An apostle, not of men [like Barnabas was for the Congregation of Antioch Syria], neither by man [like Matthias was by being chosen by Peter], but [of and] by Jesus Messiah and God.

He said ...

2 Cor. 12:11-12. I ought to have been commended of you; for in nothing am I behind the very chief of the apostles, though I be nothing. Truly, the signs of an apostle were worked among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds.

One of the purposes of the Book of Acts, written by a travelling companion of Paul, was to help Paul defend his apostleship. The account of Jesus' appointment of Paul to be an apostle is given three times in the book and comprises 47 verses: 9:1-22, 22:4-16, and 26:9-20. And Luke makes sure to mention as many miracles for Paul as he does for Peter, to show Paul's apostleship was at least equal with Peter's.

Stott. Luke ... gives prominence in his story to Peter (chapters 1-12) and to Paul (chapters 13-28). ... Both Peter and Paul were filled with the Holy Spirit (4:8 and 9:17; 13:9); both preached the word of God with boldness (4:13, 31 and 9:27, 29); both bore witness before Jewish audiences ... (e.g. 2:22 ff. and 13:16 ff.); both preached to Gentiles as well as Jews (10:34 ff. and 13:46 ff.); both received visions which gave

vital direction to the church's developing mission (10:9 ff.; 16:9); both were imprisoned ... and then miraculously set free (12:7 ff. and 16:25 ff.); both healed a congenital cripple ... (3:2 ff. and 14:8 ff.); both healed other sick people (9:41 and 28:8); both exorcized evil spirits (5:16 and 16:18); ... people were healed by Peter's shadow and by Paul's handkerchiefs and aprons (5:15 and 19:12); both raised the dead ... (9:36 ff. and 20:7 ff.); both called down God's judgment on a sorcerer ... (8:20 ff. and 13:6 ff.); and both refused the worship of their fellow human beings ... (10:25-26 and 14:11 ff.).³

Another requirement for an apostle, was that he had to have received certain transmissions directly from Jesus to pass on to the Congregations.

Acts 1:2. [Jesus] was taken up, after he through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles [to transmit to the Congregation].

As an apostle, Paul couldn't tell a Congregation, "Here are the commandments Peter says Jesus gave him during the forty days after the resurrection." Instead, Jesus gave those same commandments directly to Paul in Arabia.

Gal. 1:15-17. When it pleased God, ... to reveal his Son in me, so that I would preach him among the heathen; immediately, I didn't confer with flesh and blood, neither did I go up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me, but I went into Arabia, and returned again to Damascus.

In 1 Corinthians, Paul mentioned three of the apostolic transmissions.

Apostolic Transmission # 1) The Headcovering congregation meeting observance.

1 Cor. 11:2-4. I praise you, brethren, that you ... keep the ordinances [παρέδωκα, paredoka, 'transmissions'], as I delivered [παράδοσεις, paradoseis, 'transmitted'] them to you. ... Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonors his head.

Apostolic Transmission # 2) The Lord's Supper Congregation meeting observance.

1 Cor. 11:23. I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered [παρέδωκα, paradoka, 'transmitted'] to you, that the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread [etc.].

Apostolic Transmission # 3) The gospel.

1 Cor. 15:3. I delivered [παρέδωκα, paradoka, 'transmitted'] to you first of all that which I also received, how that Messiah died for our sins.

Gal. 1:11. The gospel which was preached of me is not after man, for I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the [direct] revelation from Jesus Messiah.

Paul didn't tell the Congregations he planted, "Peter says, Jesus said, to keep the Lord's Supper." Paul received direct revelation from Jesus as to what every Congregation should do, so he could fulfil his apostolic ministry as Jesus' representative.

1 Cor. 4:17. My ways [not Peter's] which are in Messiah, as I teach everywhere, in every

Congregation.

Transmissions received from men are not authoritative. But Paul received his transmissions directly from Messiah, as his apostle, not from men.

Col. 2:8. Beware lest any man spoil you ... after the tradition [παράδοσιν, paradosin, 'transmissions'] of men, ... and not after Messiah.

So Peter partially misinterpreted scripture, and went beyond his authority in even trying to select an apostolic replacement for Judas; whereas Jesus returned to choose Paul.

Acts 1:24-26. Casting Lots

The Word. 1 Sam. 20:20-23. When Samuel had caused all the tribes of Israel to come near, ... Saul ... was taken [by casting lots].

Not Wisdom. Acts 1:24-26. They prayed, and said, "You, Lord, which know the hearts of all men, show which of these two you have chosen." ... And they gave forth their lots, and the lot fell on Matthias.

After Peter and the other apostles selected two men they thought were qualified to replace Judas, they cast lots to decide between the two. Lol, the lot had to fall on one of them!

In the Old Testament, God provided guidance about Achan, Saul, Jonathan, and Jonah through lots; but the lots were cast on an entire group, and the results were always confirmed by prophecy or confession.

Achan. Josh. 7: 16-22. Joshua ... brought Israel by their tribes, ... and Achan ... was taken, ... and said, "Indeed, I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done." ... So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran to the tent; and, behold, it was hid in his tent, and the silver under it.

Saul. 1 Sam. 20:20-23. When Samuel had caused all the tribes of Israel to come near, ... Saul ... was taken [by casting lots]. And when they sought him, he couldn't be found. Therefore they enquired of the Lord further, ... and the Lord answered, "Behold, he has hidden himself among the stuff." And they ran and brought him from there.

Jonathan. 1 Sam. 14:40-43. Then said [Saul] to all Israel, "You be on one side, and I and Jonathan my son will be on the other side." ... Saul said to the Lord, ... "Give a perfect lot." ... And Jonathan was taken, ... and ... said, "I only tasted a little honey with the end of the rod that was in my hand, and, lo, I must die."

Jonah. Jon. 1:7-12. They said, ... "Come, and let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this evil is on us." So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah. ... And he said to them, "Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea, and the sea will be calm to you. For I know that for my sake this great tempest is on you."

If the apostles wanted to use lots in a scriptural manner, they should have cast lots on their entire group, and then if one of the two men they thought were qualified was taken, that might have provided some confirmation that God was providing guidance. Actually, the first lot should have been,

“someone in our group,” versus “someone outside our group,” since we know Paul would eventually be Jesus’ choice.

God either causes or allows all that happens. “The lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord” (Prov. 16:33). But God is not obligated to give guidance through lots because someone, even an apostle, wants him to.

God did provide guidance through lots to a small number of Israel’s rulers and prophets, like Joshua, Samuel, Saul, and Jonah; but there’s no indication he’ll provide guidance to us like that. Would you want to follow ...

Friesen. A leader who announces: “We should be led by God. So I will not make decisions, but every issue will be decided by casting lots?”⁴

After the apostles chose Matthias, he was “numbered with the eleven apostles” (Acts 1:26), and Peter stood up “with the eleven” (Acts 2:14) at Pentecost, and “the twelve called the multitude of the disciples to them” (Acts 6:2) to choose deacons. So from Acts 1-6, the Congregation counted Matthias among the twelve apostles. But did God count him as an apostle? Paul is first mentioned in Acts 7, and from then on there is no more mention of Matthias, “the eleven,” or “the twelve.”

The author of the book of Acts gave eleven verses, to this episode, and never mentioned Matthias again. Of course, only Peter, James, and John of the original twelve were mentioned by name after Acts 1:13. But Jesus’ choosing of Paul is repeated three times in 45 verses in Acts 9:1-22, 22:4-16, and 26:9-20.

Peter and the other apostles knew that only twelve apostles of Jesus Messiah will rule over the twelve tribes in the Messianic Kingdom.

Mt. 19:28. In the regeneration when the Son of man will sit in the throne of his glory, you also will sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

The apostles didn't try to appoint another apostle to replace James after Herod killed him in Acts 12, unlike the plethora of people claiming to be apostles of Messiah today. Only thirteen men in the New Testament were ever said to be apostles of Jesus Messiah. The original twelve, including Judas ...

Lu. 6:13-16. He chose twelve, whom also he named apostles: ... Peter and Andrew his brother, James and John [his brother], Philip and Bartholomew, Matthew and Thomas, James ... and Simon, and Judas the brother of James and Judas Iscariot, which also was the traitor.

And Paul ...

1 Cor. 1:1, 2 Cor. 1:1, Eph. 1:1, Col. 1:1, 1 Tim. 1:1, 2 Tim. 1:1, Titus 1:1, 1 Pet. 1:1, 2 Pet. 1:1. An apostle of Jesus Messiah.

Friesen says maybe Matthias will judge one of the twelve tribes in Israel, while Paul will be Messiah's judge over the Gentile nations. "Paul might have been like the Levites. They were the thirteenth tribe without land."⁵ (There were thirteen tribes in Israel, not twelve; because one of Jacob's twelve sons, Joseph, fathered two tribes, Ephraim and Manasseh.)

Acts 2 says “many wonders and signs were done by the apostles” (Acts 2:43), and it doesn’t mention Matthias a standing out by not being able to do any wonders or signs. But saying the apostles as a group did many miracles isn’t the same as saying Matthias, did miracles, like we know Paul did.

2 Cor. 12:11-12. In nothing am I behind the very chief of the apostles. ... Truly the signs of an apostle were worked among you.

God didn’t explicitly condemn the apostles’ decision in Acts 1. But God also didn’t explicitly condemn Jephthah’s tragic decision to sacrifice his precious daughter when “she came out to meet him with timbrels and with dances” (Jdg. 11:34), or Ezra’s tragic decision to “put away all the wives and such as are born of them” (Ezra 10:3). The book of Acts records some mistakes men made, without explicitly saying they were mistakes, including Barnabas’ decision to break with Paul in Acts 13, and Paul’s philosophizing speech in Athens in Acts 17, to help us learn discernment and decision-making principles.

It’s appropriate in a book like Acts, whose purpose includes teaching the brethren how to make good decisions, it should begin with a decision-making exercise. And it’s appropriate a book about the works and authority of the apostles should begin by considering the limits of even apostolic authority.

Inward Impressions

Now that we’ve looked at how Peter and the other apostles made one of their first decisions in Acts, let’s notice they didn’t make it by trying to listen for inward impressions. There’s more support for casting lots for guidance in the

Bible, than for following inward impressions. The problem with trying to use inward impressions to make decisions is that the Bible never tells us how we would know if an inward impression was a thought or a message.

Friesen. When it comes to non-commanded decisions, we are given no criteria in Scripture for distinguishing the inner impression of the Spirit from the impression of the self or from any other potential 'voice.'⁶

Dallas Willard tried to show how to differentiate the voice of God from our own thoughts and feelings, but his advice is based on his own and others reported, unconfirmable, mystical experiences. As you read his quotation, notice the lack of scriptural authority.

Willard [my underlining and all-caps]. We may mistakenly think that if God spoke to us we would automatically know who is speaking, without having to learn, but that is simply a mistake. ... It leaves us totally at the mercy of any stray ideas we have picked up about what God's speaking is like. ... The three factors of [God's speaking are] QUALITY, SPIRIT and CONTENT [based on what scripture reference?]. ... The voice of God will usually (though not always) take the form of certain thoughts or perceptions that enter our minds. These obviously are not sounds.

The QUALITY of God's voice is more a matter of the weight or impact an impression makes on our consciousness. A certain steady and calm force with which communications from God impact our soul incline us toward assent and even toward active compliance. ... The assent or compliance is frequently given before the content of the

communication is fully grasped [Really?!]. At least I find it so, and others do as well. We also sense inwardly the immediate power of God's voice. ... The voice of the subconscious argues with you, tries to convince you; but the inner voice of God does not argue, does not try to convince you. It just speaks, and it is self-authenticating. It has the feel of the voice of God within it. ...

The voice of God speaking in our souls also bears within itself a characteristic ... SPIRIT of exalted peacefulness and confidence, of joy, of sweet reasonableness and of goodwill. His voice is not the voice of a bully. It will not run over you and your will. It is, in short, the spirit of Jesus. ...

Finally, there is a CONTENT that marks the voice of God. ... Evan Roberts, when he was in college, ... [told his] principal, ... "I hear a voice that tells me I must go home and speak to the young people in my home church. ... Is that the voice of the devil or the voice of the Spirit?" Phillips answered, very wisely, "The devil never gives orders like that. You can have a week off."⁷

I hope this sounds as silly and made-up to you, as it does to me. If God wanted to direct us moment-by-moment by his voice, wouldn't that be one of the most important things in the world for us to know how to be clear about?! Wouldn't it merit at least a passage in one of the epistles, and examples throughout the Book of Acts?

As the apostles and brethren waited in Jerusalem for the coming of the gift of the Holy Spirit, and "all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication" (Acts 1:14), Peter didn't say, "While we prayed, I felt impressed for us to

appoint a replacement for Judas.” He said, “Men and brethren, this scripture needs [to be] fulfilled ... concerning Judas. ... ‘His office let another take’” (Acts 1:16-20).

And once the apostles decided to replace Judas, Matthew didn’t say, “While we prayed, I heard a still, small voice saying, ‘Shlomo is an amazingly dependable man,’ and it was like a steady and calm force on my soul inclining me towards assent. It didn’t feel like bullying, and it had the feel of the voice of God within it, and an exalted peacefulness, a sweet reasonableness, to it.”

We don’t see the brethren making decisions on that basis in the book of Acts, and there was no need to, because the Word and Wisdom are sufficient for all godly decision-making. When I say “the Word,” I’m including any true, prophetic, direct revelation. For the early brethren, this would have included the Old Testament scriptures; whatever New Testament scriptures they had access to, such as a letter from an apostle that would eventually be recognized as part of the Bible; oral prophecies from New Testament prophets, including prophecies from the exercise of spiritual gifts in the Congregation; and visions and appearances from angels and Yeshua. But today we have only the Old and New Testament scriptures, since the Word, the Bible, is complete.

Whereas this book is about making decisions by the Word and Wisdom, Priscilla Shirer wrote a book about making decisions by the Word and the Spirit. She divides history into four parts: 1) the prophets before Jesus, who validated their prophecy by signs, 2) Jesus, who validated his prophesy by miracles, 3) the apostles, who also validated their prophecy by miracles, and 4) us, now that the New Testament is complete, who validate our inner impressions by the Word instead of by miracles.

Shirer, *Discerning the Voic*. [1-Before Jesus:] One of the ways God spoke to His people as a whole in Old Testament times was through the person of a prophet. And the main way people could confirm the prophet's message was through a visible sign. ... [2-Jesus:] Things changed, however, when Christ came. ... No longer were prophets one of the primary ways God spoke to His people. When Jesus came and walked the earth, God began speaking through the person of His Son. And He, in turn, confirmed God's Word through miracles. ... [4-Us:] When the Holy Spirit arrived in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost ... by enabling believers to actually receive this Spirit inside themselves, God initiated the most personal way He still speaks to us today - directly through the Holy Spirit, hand in hand with Scripture. ... And ever since, He has attempted to reveal the mind of God individually and continually to every saint willing to listen. [3-Apostles:] Hold on, then. If things changed at Pentecost with the giving of the Holy Spirit, why is the remainder of the book of Acts - the chronicle of the first-century church - still replete with miraculous activity? ... The apostles and their close associates performed miracles in the early years of the church for the same reason Jesus had performed them - to confirm His spoken words, which had not yet been fully recorded. [4-Us Again:] But once His Word was written down, there was no longer a need to rely on miracles as the sole [?] validation of what He said. ... We don't have to depend on them to know when God is speaking. We have His Word. We have His Spirit. The Bible and the Holy Spirit go hand in hand.⁸

The problem is, that although the Bible says God spoke through [1] prophets, and [2] Jesus, and [3] the apostles;

the New Testament never describes God speaking [4] “directly through the Holy Spirit ... individually and continually to every saint willing to listen.”⁹

Shirer describes how difficult and uncertain it is to hear God’s voice directly through the Spirit today.

Shirer, *Discerning the Voice*. Perhaps, like me, you’ve spent far too many years of your life not hearing or at least not recognizing His voice [p. 9]. ... Or to be so confused by flying thoughts and voices that I couldn’t pick God’s voice out of the crowd [p. 10]. ... Why don’t we hear Him? What keeps us from recognizing Him? How can we know when He is speaking? ... Nobody has all of this figured out. [p. 11]. ... How discouraging it can be when you don’t feel like God has any interest in talking to you and revealing His will [p. 12]. You genuinely want to hear from God. You want to know whether the recent circumstances you’ve noticed around you are more than mere coincidence, or whether the comments you heard someone make to you might truly be a signal of God’s will and direction. You want to make sure that this conviction you’re feeling is not just of your own creating. ... You want to get to the bottom of this often hard-to-understand concept of discerning God’s voice ... in relation to an important dilemma or decision in your life, and you want to find out how to hear Him more clearly. ... [Sometimes] unconfessed sin in our lives clog[s] the connection, some[times] we don’t know what we’re even looking for when it comes to sensing the Spirit’s prompting [p. 21]. ... If you have placed your faith in Jesus Christ, yet you’re discouraged right now because you’re struggling to discern His voice, please don’t doubt your salvation [p. 34]. ... I recall ... a time when I sensed God’s

Spirit convicting me to cut away some specific things from my life so that I could more sharply focus on my relationship with Him. Or at least it seemed as if that was the conviction I felt. Of course, it could have also been a legalistic trap I was falling into, or an overreaction to a passing thought, or a bit of hyper spirituality that would sure sound impressive if I were to share it in a group. Who knew? [p. 48]. ... Would that burning bush still do it for you, as opposed to all this ... subtlety? ... His voice may sometimes be hard to discern without careful, deliberate discipline and self-denial [p. 68]. ... He will consistently bombard your thoughts and your heart with His message until you're convinced of its authenticity. Even if it takes a while. Which it does, with most of us. We are nothing if not capable of missing His signals, wouldn't you agree? [p. 81]. ... [Even great saints have said,] "I don't always get it right." Turns out, there are no experts at hearing from Him. Each of us is still learning. ... Don't be too hard on yourself. Even when you hear incorrectly. ... The fact that you still make mistakes or get your signals crossed from time to time won't cause Him to ... quit speaking, ... [even] after you've moved forward in an area you thought was His will only to discover later that it wasn't. ... Each miscalculation is another opportunity [p. 88]. ... People will often say something like, "I think I'm hearing from God, but I'm just not sure. What if it's the Enemy luring me into a huge mistake? What if it's just my own voice, leading me in the direction of what I truly want and prefer? How can I know if it's God or not? [p. 130]. ... You might tell me how desperately you want to know God's will, how you feel almost in bondage to doubt and uncertainty, how you're afraid to take a step in any direction because you're not sure it's the one

He's leading you to take. You want to hear His voice and receive His guidance. And yet from all appearances, it seems as if God is hiding from you - forcing you to hunt and peck, try and guess, hit and miss. And the heaviness of your search and the paralysis of not knowing why He's so silent is weighing you down, stripping you of all joy and confidence [p. 151]. ... A person never really exhausts the question, "What does God's voice sound like?" [p. 157]. ... One of the main reasons hearing God can become so difficult for us - so cloudy, so confusing - is that God, who knows our hearts, doesn't do much speaking into a person's life who isn't dedicated to obeying Him [p. 183].

Like Willard did, Shirer gives us some very complicated and subjective guidelines to differentiate the voice of God from our own thoughts or Satan's trap.

Shirer, *Discerning the Voice*. So how do we really do this? How can we know that what we're sensing within is actually the voice of God? ... With our hearts still bearing the taint of sin and our opinions still influenced by a worldly culture, how do we develop the ability to hear Him with a sure degree of confidence? ... His pattern is to say things more than once, in more than one way [p. 46]. ... Listening to Him is an exercise in hearing from within [p. 39]. ... Turn your thoughts inwardly as you earnestly seek God. Consider what you are sensing in your "gut" [p. 47]. ... The next time you're shopping and see an item you really want, but something inside says "no" - it's probably God [p. 50]. ... I began to feel the Holy Spirit leading me to consider marriage with [her future husband] [p. 56]. ... Frederick Meyer, in *The Secret of Guidance*, said, "God's impressions within

and His Word without are always corroborated by His providence around. ... Circumstances, like glowworms, will sparkle along your path. You will become so sure that you are right, when God's three witnesses concur, that you could not be surer though an angel beckoned you on" [p. 78]. ... When a message or inner voice you are sensing makes you feel condemned, ... then it is probably not from God [p. 98]. ... When you boil it down to its foundation, do you sense the warmth and love of God? [p. 100]. ... The character of God will come shining through when He speaks to you. If it doesn't, it's not His voice. You'll know His voice by its loving, personal tone. [p. 103]. ... When you have His peace concerning a specific situation ... you should begin to consider that you're hearing His voice. [p. 107]. ... "Peace" can have sort of an airy, dreamy, wistful feel. But ... the peace of God is strong, intense, palpable, real. You can sense its stable presence [p. 108]. ... Or do I instead feel restless and unsteady, unsure about what these directions are telling me?" [p. 109]. ... Pay close attention to what you're hearing and sensing. You may be wrestling with a decision about a job offer in another city - or an employee you need to hire [or fire!]. See which option is accompanied by a steady, solid, gripping settledness deep within [p. 110]. ... What He's saying to you may sound impossible. ... Up for a challenge? If what you sense from God never contains anything that surprises you, you're probably making it up yourself. Jan Johnson [p. 119]. ... I've got to be honest with you - this characteristic of God's voice has become the primary way that I recognize His leading in my life [p. 119]. ... That's often how we can differentiate between God's voice and the voice of a "stranger" (John 10:5). By the challenge [p. 124]. ... I often know God is

speaking when a thought occurs to me that surprises me, maybe makes me a little uncomfortable [p. 125]. ... When what you are sensing seems strange, you can confidently say, "My God would never say anything like that" [p. 130]. ... The Holy Spirit ... has a desire to share divine revelations with you. He'll do it in a vast number of ways [p. 133]. ... Immediately my heart sensed the warm stirring that so often accompanies the voice of God. Peace. Assurance. Authority. Do it! [p. 144]. ... When the Holy Spirit speaks, His voice comes with power and authority. It hits you deep. It grips you. Your heart burns. It's Him! You know it [p. 145]! ... When God speaks, His voice is noticeable by its resonance, depth, and impact. It pulses with a calm, steady force [she must have read Willard's book] that makes a clear impression on your soul. It is the "burning fire" [p. 146]. ... Truly, you can distinguish the voice of God from any other voice by the powerful influence it carries in your soul [p. 146]. ... When God's Word leaps off the page and grips you - I mean stuns you as though you were awakened from sleep by a thunderclap ... this isn't some random occurrence or coincidence. It is God Himself speaking through His Word [p. 149]! ... He'll tell Abraham to sacrifice his beloved son Isaac [please don't do this!]. He'll tell Gideon that deliverance will come with a mere three hundred soldiers [p. 162]. ... [She says we should emulate her friend Monica who says,] "I am committed to obeying His leading, no matter how illogical His instructions may seem to be [p. 182]." ... The worst thing you can do - the quickest way to become insensitive - is to ignore an impression. You must not allow yourself to hear without responding. - Peter Lord [p. 186]. ... Once you've heard from God, delay is no longer an option - only instant obedience

[I don't recommend this] is [p. 188]. ... I was being met with an about-face directive from God that was so strong, I had no doubt He was speaking to me [p. 190]. ... I knew that what I was about to share [at my seminar] would enable them to begin recognizing the internal promptings of God's Spirit. This would mean that they'd become accountable for obeying Him [p. 37].

Shirer rebuts her own teaching by admitting that none of what she teaches to us is ever described like that in the Bible. No prophet in scripture ever had to read a book like, *Discerning the Voice of God: How to Recognize When God Speaks*, lol.

Shirer. Looking at both the Old and New Testaments, we see Him speaking to His people in so many incredible ways. ... And those who heard Him weren't in any doubt about who was talking or what He was saying. Whether He spoke to reveal His character or to give specific direction, His voice was clear. Unmistakable. From the very beginning of time, and no matter what the method He chose.¹⁰

The problem with Pentecostal and Charismatic doctrine, is that it's based on experience that doesn't match up with the Bible. In the Bible, prophets were always 100% accurate, not merely mostly accurate, like 98%, because God's own name was at stake.

Ex. 18:20-22. The prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, ... that prophet shall die. And if you say in your heart, "How shall we know the word which the Lord hath not spoken?" When a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the thing

follow not, nor come to pass [within the timing included in the prophecy], that is the thing which the Lord has not spoken, but the prophet has spoken it presumptuously.

Likewise with miracles, there's no case in the Bible where a prophet tried to perform a miracle and wasn't 100% completely and instantaneously successful. There was one man the disciples tried to heal and couldn't; but then Jesus healed him. God probably included this example in the Bible so we realize there's no other such case of a prophet trying to heal and failing.

Mt. 17:14-18. There came to [Jesus] a certain man, ... saying, "Lord, have mercy on my son. ... I brought him to your disciples, and they couldn't cure him." Then ... Jesus rebuked the devil; and he departed out of him, and the child was cured from that very hour.

And there was one man Jesus healed partially, and then immediately healed him totally. God probably included this example in the Bible so we realize there's no other such case of a prophet not healing completely and instantaneously.

Mk. 8:23-25. When [Jesus] had spit on his eyes, and put his hands on him, he asked him if he saw anything. And he looked up, and said, "I see men as trees walking." After that he put his hands again on his eyes, and made him look up, and he was restored, and saw every man clearly.

Even the enemies of God never denied a Bible miracle in the occurred, since biblical miracles were always clearly authentic, unlike today. They could only deny the source of the miracle, or try to prevent miracles through persecution.

Mt. 12:22-24. Then was brought to him one possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb, and he healed him. ... But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, "This fellow doesn't cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils."

Acts 4:14-17. Beholding the man which was healed standing with [Peter and John], they could say nothing against it. But ... they conferred among themselves, saying, "What shall we do to these men? For indeed that a notable miracle has been done by them is manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem, and we can't deny it. But that it spread no further among the people, let us straightly threaten them."

So from where do Willard and Shirer get their doctrine about discerning the voice of God, since it doesn't come from the Bible? They get it from their experience.

Shirer, *Discerning the Voice*. When I've made mistakes, missed hearing Him, ... I've often felt like the journey may not have been worth it and that I'll never get this right. But I hope these very personal experiences of mine will show you how [to] ... see more clearly than before [p. 12]. ... From even the limited experience of my own life - He will speak. And you will know [p. 152].

But why do Willard and Shirer follow doctrine which they can only arrive at by their own, and others claims of, experience, and not by the Bible? Because they very much want things to be the way they describe them.

Willard. How lonely life is! Oh, we can get by in life with a God who does not speak. Many at least think they do. But it is not much of a life.^{[11](#)}

Shirer. We have a hunger to hear from God that unites us in spirit. Probably one that each of us would freely admit some frustration over, but in the end, something we know we simply cannot live without.¹²

Geisler warned against subjectivity, like inward impressions, in the foreword to Arthur L. Johnson's book, *Faith Misguided: Exposing the Dangers of Mysticism*.

Geisler. A mystical maze has settled on our land. Fuzzy thinking is the order of the day. The Good Ship Evangelicalism is sailing without rational rudders in the hazy sea of subjectivity. Into this fog Arthur Johnson's book comes as a beacon in the night.¹³

The Mormons are a cult that rely heavily on direct revelation by means of feelings. "If it is right I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore you shall feel that it is right."¹⁴ But the Bible tells us where inner voices and strong impressions come from: our own thoughts.

Ps. 4:4. Talk with your own heart on your bed.

It's a serious mistake to suppose they're direct revelation.

Ezk. 13:1-10. Say to them that prophesy out of their own hearts, "Hear the word of the Lord." Thus says the Lord God, "Woe to the foolish prophets, that follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing! ... They have seen nothing and lying divination, saying, 'The Lord says,' and the Lord has not sent them, and they have made others to hope that they would confirm the word. Have you not seen an empty vision, and have you not spoken a lying divination, whereas you say, 'The Lord says it,' albeit I have not spoken?" Therefore, thus says the Lord God, "Because you

have spoken nothingness, and [in supposed visions] seen lies, therefore, behold, I am against you,” says the Lord God. And my hand will be upon the prophets that see nothing, and that divine lies; they shall not be in the assembly of my people. Because, even because, they have seduced my people, saying, “Peace,” and there was no peace.

Fleeces and Bible Roulette

Friesen says casting lots would be better than using fleeces.

Friesen. This practice [lots] appears to be the most defensible method for putting out a fleece. Why create your own circumstantial sign before a decision when you can pull out dice (or lots)? It’s quicker, cleaner, and has biblical precedent.¹⁵

The only biblical precedent of using a fleece, at least had a miraculous aspect to it. But it indicated lack of faith in what God said.

Jdg. 6:12, 16-17, 37-39. The Angel of the Lord appeared to [Gideon], and said, ... “You will save Israel from the hand of the Midianites. Haven’t I sent you?” ... And [Gideon] said to him, ... “Show me a sign. ... I will put a fleece of wool in the floor, and if the dew is on the fleece only, and it is dry on all the earth beside, then I will know that you will save Israel by my hand, as you have said.” And it was so. ... And Gideon said to God, “Let not your anger be hot against me. ... Let it now be dry only on the fleece, and on all the ground let there be dew.” And God did so.

It’s not a biblical fleece if it omits the miraculous.

Friesen. There is the “phone fleece” method of dating. ... A busy signal was a closed door - I shouldn’t call back (maybe some other fellow was asking her out); if she answered but turned me down, then God did not want me to take her out (nor did the girl); if she answered the phone and accepted my invitation, she was the one!¹⁶

And Bible Roulette is no better.

Waltke. The use of promise boxes, or flipping open your Bible and pointing your finger, or relying on the first thought to enter your mind after a prayer are unwarranted forms of Christian divination.¹⁷

Interpreting scripture by inward impressions about the Word, isn’t making decisions by the Word, but by inward impressions.

Friesen. While the author intended a single meaning, the [biblical] text is often interpreted by modern readers in more than one way. ... If a commentator were to ... write something like this: “In response to my prayer for guidance, the Spirit has indicated to my heart through His still small voice that the correct interpretation is the last one listed above,” ... his book would be rejected for publication by any reputable publisher (and rightly so) on grounds of improper methodology and irresponsible scholarship. ... There would be nothing to prevent scholars who espouse opposing views from making the same claims to divine guidance. That, in turn, would make a mockery of genuine biblical scholarship and impugn the Spirit of truth as the author of confusion. ... Impressions may be good commentaries of our

present feelings, but they are not trustworthy guides for determining proper interpretation of Scripture.¹⁸

Joubert and Maartens wrote a journal article in 2017 entitled “The Use Of The Bible As A Source Of Divine Guidance On Matters Which It Does Not Directly Address: Is It Scriptural?”

Joubert. The problem we have sought to address is the practice of decontextualising scripture and recontextualising it to say something it was not originally meant to say and then using it as a ‘word from the Lord.’ [p. 129] ... The recontextualised meaning is then taken as a personal message from God [for guidance and decision making]. [p 105] ...

In 1794, John Newton, ... writer of the well-known hymn ‘Amazing Grace’, wrote a short booklet on knowing God’s will. In it he states that the practice of opening the Bible at random to discern God’s will originated in Rome, in particular, with ... Sortes Virgiliana (sortes being the Latin for ‘divination’), which refers to ‘the practice of divination by opening the writings of Virgil at random and accepting as divine guidance the first words the eye fell upon.’ ... He wrote that people who use [this method] ‘commit the greatest extravagances, expect the greatest impossibilities, and contradict the plainest dictates of common sense, while they think they have the Word of God on their side.’ [pp. 111-112] ...

For Pentecostal communities that have taken ‘a ... postmodern turn’ in the reading of scripture, less and less emphasis, if it all, has been placed on the intended meaning of the human author (Arrington 1994). ... Davies (2009) ... declares that Pentecostals

have 'little interest' in the 'surface [i.e., plain, literal] meaning of the text' and pay 'scant attention' to the 'original intention of the author'. Kenneth Archer (2015) ... states that the focus of meaning has shifted from 'the author's mind' to the meaning ... of the reader. For Davies (2009) ... this means that we have to accept that the meaning a text has for you may not be the meaning it has for me. If that is so, then there can be no objections to decontextualising a text to recontextualise it and then making it say what it was not originally meant to say. ... If we are to accept that a text has multiple meanings, then we are to accept that no text has an actual meaning, but this idea is easily refuted, for every Christian knows that John 3:16 has one and only one meaning. The notion of multiple meanings also leads to the idea that two conflicting or contradictory meanings can both be true at the same time. ... Paul's instruction to Timothy is to ... '[avoid] contradictions [Gr. antitheseis] of what is falsely called knowledge' (1 Tim. 6:20; NKJV). ... One of the laws of logic or laws of thought is known as the law of non-contradiction, which states that some assertion, statement or claim cannot be both true and false at the same time in the same sense. [pp. 118-119] ...

The Wrongful Assumption That My Community Has Authority To Decide What A Text Means. According to Davies (2009), ... a reader's 'Spirit-inspired message needs to resonate in a Spirit-filled community', the reason of which is to serve as a sort of preventative measure to 'misrepresentation of the meaning of a text'. Archer (2015) ... puts the same point thus: 'The Pentecostal communities must discern rightly what the Spirit is saying in and through the scriptures. The community must discern what the text means

and how that meaning is to be lived out in the community'. ... [They imply] a community has the authority to decide what a text means. [p. 120] ... Does recontextualisation imply or entail that the authority of the Word of God can be subjected to or be replaced by the authority of its readers? [p. 109]

So, although the apostles rightfully based their decision to choose a replacement for Judas on scripture rather than inward impressions, they partially misinterpreted Psalm 109, and made the wrong decision. In this life, even our wisest decision-making efforts will always be subject to some uncertainty.

If God really guided us moment by moment through inward impressions, we would know the outcome of our decisions in advance with certainty. But James says:

Jas. 1:13-15. Go to now, you that say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain," whereas you don't know what will be tomorrow. ... For you ought to say, "If the Lord will, we will live, and do this, or that."

Another newer form of guidance by inward impressions is called the 'relationship view.'

Goosen. By fostering a relationship with Jesus, we learn how to be attentive to him, 'as an immediate experience and as a dynamic of our Christian experience' (Huffman 2009:198). ... Our ability to discern is progressive and proportionate to the depth of our relationship (Blackabys 2002:234). ... The more time we spend with him, the better we will come to know him.¹⁹

This is even worse than the traditional view of inward impressions. With the relationship view, we not only lack a way to differentiate between Spirit-generated impressions and our own thoughts, but we also have to get closer to the indwelling Jesus through mystical, internal experiences to know God's will, which is impossible. Jesus said to the Father ...

Jn. 17:22-23. The glory which you gave me, I have given them, so that they may be one, even as we are one. I in them, and you in me.

We can't get any closer than that! We will grow in maturity over time, but that's not the same thing as retreating to some inner place to imagine we're meeting with the mystical, indwelling Messiah.

Logic

Some people contrast 'head knowledge' with 'heart knowledge,' by which they mean 'rational knowledge' versus 'emotional knowledge.' But biblically, the heart is where rational thinking takes place.

Mk. 2:6-8. There were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts, ... "Who can forgive sins but God only?" And immediately when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, he said to them, "Why do you reason these things in your hearts?"

Biblically, the heart is where reasoning takes place, because the heart is comprised of both the soul, which has intents, emotions, and will; and the spirit, which has thoughts, logic, reasoning, and words.

Heb. 4:12. The dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and ... the thoughts [spirit] and intents [soul] of the heart.

The spirit is the part of the heart that thinks, and knows things by using words. That's why angels, which are only spirits, understand words, logic, and morality.

1 Cor. 2:11-13. For what knows the things of a man, except the spirit of man which is in him? Even so, the things of God knows nothing, except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, so that we can know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teaches, but [in words] which the Holy Spirit teaches; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

Man's wisdom, including naturalism and rationalism, is not unspiritual because it's rational; but because it's rationally based on naturalistic presuppositions; whereas God's wisdom is spiritual because it's rationally based on "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Eph. 6:17). Since the spirit in both man and God is the source of words and thinking, on the authority of the Bible, we can say there is nothing more unspiritual than making decisions according to feelings and emotions instead of logic.

Jesus is "the Word" (Jn. 1:1), "the Logos," or "the Logic" in Greek; so logic is inherently spiritual and good. You can't read Paul's writings without noticing his heavy use of logic to teach spiritual truth.

Rom. 6:3, 11. Don't you know? ... Reckon ... yourselves.

Rom. 12:2-3. Be transformed by the renewing of your mind. ... Think soberly.

Does this mean intellectually intelligent people have an advantage learning God's will? No, because understanding truth is primarily a moral issue. "Men, ... hold [down] the truth in unrighteousness," Rom. 1:18.

Acts 4:1-31. When To Disobey Authorities

Acts 4:1-4, 18-19. As [Peter and John] spoke to the people, the priests ... and the Sadducees, came on them, being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead. [The Sadducees didn't believe in resurrection.] ... Many of them which heard the word believed, and the number of the men was about five thousand. ... And [the Jewish leaders] called [Peter and John], and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it's right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge."

We obey commands of authorities, only in order to give indirect obedience to God, who directly commands us to obey authorities.

Rom. 13:1-2. Let every soul be subject to the higher authorities, for there is no authority but of God. The authorities that be are ordained of God. Whoever therefore resists the authority, resists the command of God.

So, when indirect obedience to God through obeying the commands of an authority, conflicts with direct commands of God, we obey the direct commands of God. However, before we put ourselves into disfavor with an authority, we should be sure there's no appropriate way we can obey both God and the authority. For example, if an unbelieving husband doesn't want his believing wife to go to Congregation meetings every Sunday morning, maybe she can go on Wednesday nights, or meet informally with sisters Thursday mornings, or every other week. The Bible says, "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together" (Heb. 10:25), not "Go to Congregation meetings every Sunday morning." If obedience to authority only causes you a financial cost, it's probably better to suffer the financial loss, and obey the authorities. The American Revolution was probably not a godly movement if it was based on a rebellion against unfair taxes.

There's no way Peter and John could have obeyed their commission to "be witnesses to me ... in Jerusalem" (Acts 1:8), and also "speak [not] at all nor teach in the name of Jesus" (Acts 4:18). The second time the apostles were arrested, they again confirmed their priorities.

Acts 5:27-29. When they had brought them, they set them before the council, and the high priest asked them, saying, "Didn't we straightly command you that you shouldn't teach in this name? And, behold, you've filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood on us." Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, "We ought to obey God rather than men."

Acts 6:1-7. The First Deacons

In Acts 6 we meet the Hellenized Jews called 'Grecians.' The Hebraic Jews weren't treating the Hellenized Jews equally in the Congregation's food distribution program for widows. To remedy the problem, the Congregation choose the first 'deacons,' either mostly or all Hellenized Jews, to handle the entire food distribution, which demonstrated their full equality and trust in the Congregation.

The Word. Jn. 21:3, 9, 15-16. Peter said to them, "I go fishing." They said, ... "We also go with you." ... As they came to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread. ... So when they had dined, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, ... do you love me more than these?" He said, ... "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." He said to him, "Feed my lambs. ... Feed my sheep. ... Feed my sheep."

And Wisdom. Acts 6:1-5, 8. When the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians [Hellenized Jews] against the Hebrews [Hebraic Jews], because their widows were neglected in the daily [food] ministration. Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples to them, and said, "It's not reasonable that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Therefore, brethren, look out from among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word. And the saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose Stephen, ... and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte [a Gentile that had been ritually circumcised as a convert to Judaism] of Antioch Syria. ... And Stephen, full of

faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people.

Notice the twelve didn't say, "we don't feel led or called to serve tables," but "It's not reasonable" (Acts 6:25). They didn't say, "God impressed it on our hearts how to solve this problem." They did what was "reasonable" (Acts 6:2). And they didn't say, "Look out from among you seven men who feel called, and have a burden for this ministry." They said, "look out from among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom" (Acts 6:3).

Waltke. Make your decision in light of giftedness. ... Take a look at the way the early church made the decision about who should wait on tables for the widows. ... It would be a false humility to take the talents of the apostles and have them spend time feeding the widows at their tables. That is just not the best use of their apostolic gifts [or of their genuine calling and appointment by Jesus].[20](#)

Acts 6:8-8:4. Judaea and Samaria

The Word. Acts 1:8. You will be witnesses to me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea and in Samaria.

And Wisdom. [They couldn't figure out a way to do it.]

Why didn't the brethren go into Judaea and Samaria? Jesus said they would be his witnesses "in all Judea and in Samaria" (Acts 1:8), but the apostles stayed in Jerusalem. It seems the brethren enthusiastically spread the gospel wherever they went, but there were theological obstacles, that Jesus had to clear for them. Each time a blockage was cleared, the brethren evangelized the next area. This was similar to when Peter was miraculously released from prison, and the angel only did the things for Peter he couldn't do for himself (Acts 12).

Though they knew it was the will of God for them to witness in Samaria, the apostles couldn't figure out how to actually implement that, while remaining true to their Jewishness. After Stephen's martyrdom in Acts 7, God allowed persecution of the brethren, that resulted in the gospel going to Samaria.

Acts 8:1-6. At that time there was a great persecution against the Congregation which was at Jerusalem, and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria. ... Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word. Then Philip went down [i.e., away from Jerusalem] to the city of Samaria, and preached Messiah to them. And the

people, with one accord, gave heed to those things which Philip spoke, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did.

After the blockage of taking the gospel to the Samaritans was cleared through persecution and Philip's preaching, then Peter and John "preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans" (Acts 8:23), and Peter also then "passed throughout all quarters" (Acts 9:32) in Judaea.

Acts 9:32-35. Peter at Lydda and Joppa

The Word. Prov. 22:29. Do you see a man diligent in his business? He will stand before kings; he will not stand before common men.

And Wisdom. Acts 9:32-42. As Peter passed throughout all quarters, he came down also to the saints which dwelt at Lydda. ... And all that dwelt at Lydda ... turned to the Lord. ... And since Lydda was near to Joppa [now 'Jaffa' or 'Yafo' in Tel Aviv], ... the disciples ... desir[ed] him that he would ... come to them. ... And ... throughout all Joppa, ... many believed in the Lord.

MacArthur. This brings up another crucial principle. Imagine trying to steer and change the direction of a stationary tractor-truck. ... It would take huge cranes and chains to even budge it. But once rolling, a truck weighing thirty-six thousand pounds is not difficult to control. ... "Now as Peter was traveling through all those regions, he came down also to the saints who lived at Lydda. There he [healed] a man named Aeneas, who ... was paralyzed. ... And all who lived at Lydda and Sharon saw him, and they turned to the Lord" (Acts 9:32-35). ... Neatly tucked into this event

is a simple little thought: “As Peter was traveling through all those regions.” Peter was already on the move. ... That’s when God directed [his steps] to Lydda. ...

On his second missionary journey Paul fulfilled the ministry God had planned for Galatia. ... The next province was Asia [Eph+], [but] ... they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the gospel in Asia [Eph+] (Acts 16:6). ... [They went] [north]west until they came to the Aegean Sea. ... “A vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man ... saying, ‘Come over to Macedonia [Phil/Thess+] and help us’” (v. 9). ... God wanted them in Macedonia area [Phil/Thess+] all the time. But He never told them till they ... couldn’t take another step. ... So many people sit around waiting for that celestial crane to move them.[21](#)

Acts 10:1-12:24. God-Fearing Gentiles

Acts 10:1-11:18. Peter and Cornelius

The apostles knew it was the will of God for the gospel to go to the uttermost part of the earth, but they didn't go. God had to use angels, visions, voices from heaven, and other direct revelation from the Holy Spirit to get Peter to go to Cornelius' house, so the first Gentiles would come to faith in Jesus and be incorporated into his body, the Congregation. This had to be done by Peter, to keep the unity of the brethren. If God had Paul do it, the Jewish brethren would have been more suspicious as to whether or not it was really from God.

The episode of Peter and Cornelius mentions one of the few places in Acts the Spirit is said to 'say' something to someone. "The Spirit said to [Peter], "Behold, three men seek you. ... Go with them, ... for I have sent them." But Peter was a prophet and an apostle, and the purpose of that direct revelation was to open the door of spirit baptism into the Congregation to the Gentiles, without which, the whole purpose of Jesus in the book of Acts would have failed.

And in the same incident, Cornelius sent three men a days journey to an address given to him by an angel in a vision; and Peter fell into a long trance, saw heaven opened in a vision, heard a voice from heaven, and was told to answer the door just as the men who were sent the day before arrived. This is not what most people today mean when they talk about the Spirit supposedly telling them what job to take, or what restaurant to go to.

Acts 10:1-22. There was a certain man ... called Cornelius, a centurion, ... one that feared God with all his house. He saw in a vision ... an angel of God coming in to him, and saying to him, ... "Send men to Joppa, and call for one ... [named] Peter. He lodges with one Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the sea side." ... And ... he called two of his household servants, and a devout [godly] soldier, ... and ... sent them to Joppa. The next day, as they ... drew near to the city, Peter went up on the housetop to pray about the sixth hour. And he became very hungry, and ... fell into a trance, and saw heaven opened, and ... a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth, wherein were all manner of four-footed beasts. ... And there came a voice to him, "Rise, Peter; kill, and eat." But Peter said, "I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean." And the voice spoke to him again, ... "What God has cleansed, don't you call common." ... Now while Peter doubted in himself what this vision which he had seen should mean, behold, the men which were sent from Cornelius ... stood before the gate. ... While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Behold, three men seek you. ... Go with them, ... for I have sent them." Then Peter went down to the men which were sent to him from Cornelius, and said, "Behold, I am he whom you seek." ... And they said, "Cornelius ... was warned from God by a holy angel to send for you."

Cornelius was already a justified man, and a synagogue-associated, God-fearing Gentile, before Peter preached to him and his friends. Therefore, he and his devout friends accepted the message of Jesus as soon as they heard it, and thereby became members of the body of Messiah, the Congregation.

Acts 10:1-2, 22. Cornelius, a centurion, ... a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the [Jewish] people, and prayed to God always; ... a just man, and one that fears God, and of good report among all the nation of the Jews.

Peter got in trouble from the brethren for sharing the gospel with Gentiles, but all the special miracles surrounding the event convinced the brethren that God had now accepted the Gentiles into the Congregation.

Acts 10:23, 28, 44-48; 11:1-4, 15-18. Certain [Jewish] brethren from Joppa accompanied him [for witnesses]. ... And [Peter] said to them [gathered at Cornelius' house], "You know how it's an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come to one of another nation; but God has showed me that I should not call any man common or unclean." ... While Peter ... spoke, ... the Holy Spirit fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Spirit. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Spirit as well as we?" And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. ... And the apostles and brethren that were in Judaea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God. And ... they that were of the circumcision contended with [Peter], saying, "You went in to men uncircumcised, and ate with them. But Peter rehearsed the matter, ... saying, ... "As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them, as on us

at the beginning [at Pentecost]. ... Forasmuch then as God gave them the same gift as he did to us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Messiah, what was I, that I could withstand God?" When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, "Then God has also to the Gentiles granted repentance to life."

Today, there are about 8 billion Gentiles in the world, and only about 15 million Jews. If even 10% of each group are born again believers, the Congregation would be composed of 800 million Gentiles and only 1.5 million Jews (2/10 of 1%). Yet the Congregation has two equal arms and legs, the two equal leavened loaves of Leviticus 23, regardless of the number of people in each loaf. But rather than graciously accommodate both cultures, most Gentiles today give no recognition to our ethnic Jewish brethren, and dominate Congregation culture by the power of sheer numbers. But for the first half of the book of Acts, the real question was, "Can even Gentiles become part of the Congregation?"

As soon as Acts tells us Peter opened the door of faith to the Gentiles, it tells us Gentiles as far away as Antioch Syria came to faith in Jesus.

Acts 11:18-21. When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, "Then God has also to the Gentiles granted repentance to life." Now they which were scattered abroad on the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as [Tyre and Sidon], and Cyprus, and Antioch Syria, preaching the word to none but to the Jews only. And some of them, ... when they came to Antioch Syria, spoke to the Grecians [Hellenized Jews, living among the Gentiles in this case rather than in Israel], preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord

was with them, and a great number believed, and turned to the Lord.

Acts 11:28-30. Antioch Syria's Gift for Jerusalem

The Word. Ex. 16:17-18. The children of Israel ... gathered [the manna], some more, some less. And when they measured it with an omer, he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack.

And Wisdom. Acts 11:28-29. Agabus ... signified by the Spirit that there would be great famine throughout all the world. ... Then the disciples [at Antioch Syria], every man according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren which dwelt in Judaea.

Did the disciples in Antioch Syria pray and ask God to 'lay it on their hearts' how much each one should give, and then listen for 'that still small voice' to tell them? No!!! They didn't believe they could receive direct revelation from God for this. And no TV evangelist urged them to give more than they could afford with false promises of proportional prosperity to follow. Instead they wisely gave "every man according to [in proportion to] his ability [εὐπορέω, evporeo, prosper; meaning what they had already been prospered]" (Acts 11:29).

Waltke. Make your decision according to your ability. ... I like the lesson of Acts 11:29: "The disciples, each according to his ability, decided to provide help for the brothers living in Judea."²²

Acts 12:4-12:19. Peter's Deliverance from Prison

The Word. Acts 12:7-8. The angel of the Lord ... [said], "Cast your garment about you, and follow me."

Jn. 15:12. Love one another, as I have loved you.

And Wisdom. Acts 12:9, 17-18. When [Peter] had considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary. ... He ... declared to them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison, ... and he departed, and went to another place.

Peter's miraculous deliverance from Herod's imprisonment in Acts 12 provides an example of using wisdom to make decisions.

Acts 12:1-5. Herod ... killed James the brother of John with the sword. And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also. ... And when he had apprehended him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him, intending after Passover to bring him forth to the people. Therefore Peter was kept in prison, but prayer was made without ceasing of the Congregation to God for him.

The high security was probably due to Peter's having been miraculously set free before.

Acts 5:17-20. The ... Sadducees ... laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in the common prison. But the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison

doors, ... and said, "Go, stand and speak in the temple."

An angel freed Peter again this time.

Acts 12:6-8. And when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and the keepers before the door kept the prison. And, behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him, ... and ... smote Peter on the side, ... saying, "Rise up quickly." And his chains fell off from his hands. And the angel said to him, "Gird yourself, and bind on your sandals." And he did so. And he said to him, "Cast your garment about you, and follow me."

The angel only did the things Peter couldn't do for himself, like putting the guards to sleep, and making the chains fall off. But he made Peter do everything he could for himself: get up, get dressed, follow me.

Acts 12:9-12. And [Peter] went out, and followed him, and didn't know that it was true which was done by the angel, but thought he saw a vision. When they were past the first and the second ward, they came to the iron gate that leads to the city, which opened to them of it's own accord. And they went out, and passed on through one street, and immediately the angel departed from him. And when Peter came to himself, he said, "Now I know for certain, that the Lord has sent his angel, and has delivered me out of the hand of Herod. ... And when he had considered the thing he came to the house of Mary the mother of ... Mark, where many were gathered together praying.

The angel escorted Peter one block extra beyond the prison, so Peter wouldn't get caught again while he stood around dazed, and then the angel left him. At that point, Peter didn't need direct revelation from a 'still small voice' of an inner impression to tell him what to do next. He used logic, and "considered the thing" (Acts 12:12).

We can imagine his thoughts at the time. "The angel didn't tell me to go preach in the temple this time (Acts 5:20), so I better go hide or get out of town. But first I better let the brethren know I'm ok, so they don't worry. They're probably praying for me at Mary's house where they often pray. I think God will keep the guards asleep long enough for me to stop by there."

Acts 12:5, 12, 17. Prayer was made without ceasing of the Congregation to God for him. ... When he had considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary the mother of ... Mark, where many were gathered together praying. ... He ... declared to them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, "Go show these things to James, and to the brethren." And he departed, and went to another place.

After Peter told the brethren what happened, "he ... went to another place" (Acts 12:17). Not staying with the brethren at Mary's house was a wise decision, because remaining there could have exposed their meeting place and put the brethren at risk. The next day, his decision to leave was validated.

Acts 12:17-19. Now as soon as it was day, there was no small stir among the soldiers, what was become of Peter. And when Herod had sought for him, and

found him not, he examined the keepers, and commanded that they should be put to death.

Paul's logic at Philippi later in Acts 16 was similar to Peter's at Jerusalem. After Paul and Silas had been wrongfully beaten and imprisoned without a trial, the next day the magistrates wanted them to leave. Paul said they would have to come themselves and publicly escort them out, probably so the believers in town would have their names cleared, and have some government protection from further persecution.

Acts 16:37-40. Paul said to [the sergeants], "They have beaten us openly uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast us into prison; and now do they thrust us out privately? No, truly; but let them come themselves and fetch us out." And [the magistrates] feared when they heard that they were Romans. And they came and besought them, and brought them out, and desired them to depart out of the city. And they went out of the prison, and entered into the house of Lydia, and when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them, and departed.

When the magistrates asked Paul to leave town, he probably reasoned he would not be antagonizing them by taking time to stop by Lydia's house and pick up Timothy, and see the other brethren: Luke, the jailor and his family, and maybe the girl who had been demon possessed. Also, it was wise to leave Luke behind, who had not been imprisoned with them, to teach and strengthen the new believers while Paul, Silas, and Timothy went on. "They [not 'we'] ... departed," Acts 16:40.

And of course, this part ends with one of the three section markers in the book of Acts.

Acts 12:24. But the word of God grew and multiplied.

Acts 12:25-14:28. Galatia



These two chapters (13-14) recount Paul's 1st missionary journey to the Roman province of Galatia, just west of Paul's home city of Tarsus. The ethnic Galatians were 'Gauls,' or 'Celts;' but Luke wasn't referring to the area of the ethnic Galatians, but to the Roman province of Galatia.²³

BibleStudy.org. New Testament cities within the Roman province of Galatia include Antioch [Galatia], ... Iconium, ... Lystra, ... and Derbe.

From this point on, I'll begin listing the 17 wise principles Paul used to make almost all his decisions without any need for direct revelation or divine guidance.

Acts 13:1-2 (Antioch Syria). 1) Go!

The Word. Acts 1:8. You will be witnesses to me ... to the uttermost part of the earth.

Acts 9:9. [Paul] is a chosen vessel to me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel.

Acts 22:6, 17-21. Describing his calling on the road to Damascus. As I ... came near to Damascus, ... suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me. ... And it came to pass, that, when I was come again to Jerusalem, even while I prayed in the temple, I was in a trance, and saw [Jesus] saying to me, "Make haste, and get quickly out of Jerusalem, for they will not receive your testimony concerning me. ... Depart; for I will send you far from here to the Gentiles."

Acts 26:16-18. Again describing his calling on the road to Damascus. I saw in the way a light from heaven, ... and ... I heard a voice speaking to me ... in the Hebrew tongue. ... And he said, "I am Jesus whom you persecute. But ... I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness, ... delivering you from the people [of Israel], and from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they can receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.

Acts 13:47. We [Paul and Barnabas] turn to the Gentiles. For so the Lord has commanded us, saying, "I have set [Messiah] to be a light of the Gentiles, so that [he] would be for salvation to the ends of the earth" [quoting Isaiah 49:6].

Rom. 11:13. I am the apostle of the Gentiles.

Gal. 1:15-16. God ... separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, so that I would preach him among the Gentiles.

Gal. 2:9. They gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship, so that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcision.

And Wisdom. [They didn't know what to do.]

Paul knew from previous revelation to himself he had been chosen to take the gospel out to the Gentiles. If anyone had a responsibility to take it to "the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8), it was him. Yet Jesus had to intervene with direct revelation to get him started. What was holding Paul, and the rest of the brethren, back from taking the gospel into Gentile territory?

Paul and Barnabas might have been too busy with all the evangelism and teaching opportunities they had at Antioch Syria, and would have gone eventually.

Acts 11:26. It came to pass, that a whole year [Barnabas and Paul] assembled themselves with the Congregation, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Messianics first in Antioch Syria [and only once more in Acts by king Herod].

But more importantly, the unresolved Jewish-Gentile question hindered Gentile evangelism. Just as Jesus had to allow the persecution that followed Stephen's martyrdom to disperse the church to preach the gospel in Samaria and the Judean countryside; and had to provide direct revelation to Peter get him to preach to Cornelius and open the door of spirit baptism into the Congregation for the

Gentiles; he also had to step in to get Paul's missionary journeys started.

Acts 13:1-2. Now there were in the Congregation that was at Antioch Syria certain prophets and teachers. ... As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, "Separate Barnabas and Saul to me for the work to which I have called them."

It certainly helped the unity of the brethren for Paul and Barnabas to be able to say their mission to the Gentiles began by divine choice, rather than by their own initiative. As Peter said in Acts 15 ...

Acts 15:7. You know how that a good while ago God chose among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth would hear the word of the gospel and believe.

And once the blockage was cleared, Paul didn't need any more direct revelation to keep heading out to further and further Gentile regions with the gospel. (God's intervention at Troas on his 2nd missionary journey only changed the order of his ministry, to put Greece before Ephesus.)

When in Acts 13:2, "the Holy Spirit said, 'Separate Barnabas and Saul to me'" nothing is mentioned about the Holy Spirit putting impressions on believers' hearts, or their "having a peace about" going to the Gentiles. Since 13:1 mentions prophets, "there were in the Congregation that was at Antioch Syria certain prophets," the context indicates the Holy Spirit spoke to the group through one or more of their prophets.

'Prophecy,' in the Bible, means 'to speak words of revelation from God,' not 'to foretell the future,' though it sometimes included that. Acts indicates that whenever prophets prophesied, it was the Holy Spirit that spoke.

Acts 1:16. The Holy Spirit by the mouth of David spoke before concerning Judas.

Acts 4:8. Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said

Acts 13:9-10. Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, ... said

Acts 21:10-11. A certain prophet, named Agabus, ... said, "Thus says the Holy Spirit,"

Acts 28:25. Well spoke the Holy Spirit by Isaiah the prophet to our fathers, saying

Acts 13:2-3 (Antioch Syria). 2) Work with Others

The Word. Mk. 6:7. He called to him the twelve, and began to send them forth by two and two.

Lu. 10:1. The Lord appointed another seventy also, and sent them two and two.

Acts 13:2. The Holy Spirit said, "Separate to me Barnabas and Saul."

And Wisdom. Acts 13:3. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

Jesus sent out the twelve and the seventy two by two. Peter and John often ministered together.

Acts 3:1-2. Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, ... and a certain man

lame from his mother's womb was ... laid daily at the gate.

Acts 8:14. When the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John.

The brethren usually sent out emissaries in groups of two or more. A rare exception was when the brethren in Jerusalem sent Barnabas to Antioch Syria. Maybe he had told them he planned to get Paul to work with him there. In any case, it didn't take him long to bring Paul there.

Acts 11:22-27. Tidings of [Hellenized Jews in Antioch Syria believing] came to the ears of the Congregation which was in Jerusalem, and they sent out Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch Syria. Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them, ... and many people were added to the Lord. Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, to seek Saul, and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch Syria.

Stott. We cannot help admiring Barnabas' humility in wanting to share the ministry with Saul, and his sense of strategy also. He must have known of Saul's calling to be the apostle to the Gentiles (9:15, 27), and it may well have been the Gentile conversions in Antioch Syria which made him think of Saul.[24](#)

Acts 11:29-30. The disciples [in Antioch Syria] ... determined to send relief to the brethren which dwelt in Judaea, ... and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

Acts 15:39-41. Barnabas took Mark, and sailed to Cyprus. And Paul chose Silas, ... and ... went through

Syria and Cilicia [Tarsus+].

Acts 15:2. They determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain others of them, should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders about this question.

Acts 15:23-27. They wrote letters. ... We have sent therefore Judas and Silas, who shall also tell you the same things by mouth.

Bohannon. The Apostle Paul modeled a team planting paradigm throughout his missionary journeys.²⁵

Murray. In 1971 my wife and I went to the largely unevangelized country of Italy as church planters with a mission agency that at that time had six church-planting couples in the country. Each couple was located in a separate city. Because so many Italian cities and towns were (and are) totally unevangelized, our mission leadership reasoned that its personnel should be spread out to cover more unreached territory. We, however, resisted this strategy, because we felt inadequate to do the work of evangelism and church planting by ourselves. After much discussion we persuaded our mission leadership to let us recruit a team of eight other missionaries to work with us in the unreached province of Pordenone, with a population of 300,000. We had a wonderful experience with that team, evangelizing together in a way that none of us was capable of doing alone, and planting a church in the capital city of the province.²⁶

Philip's single-handed ministry in Acts 8, and Peter's in Acts 9, were exceptions.

Acts 8:5. Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Messiah to them.

Acts 9:32-38. As Peter passed throughout all quarters, he came down also to the saints which dwelt at Lydda and ... Joppa.

Sometimes circumstances forced Paul to work alone for brief periods.

Acts 17:13-15a. When the Jews of Thessalonica had knowledge that the word of God was preached of Paul at Berea, they came there also, and stirred up the people. And then immediately the brethren sent away Paul to go as it were to the sea, but Silas and Timothy abode there still. And they that conducted Paul brought him to Athens.

But Paul's preference was always to work with others.

Acts 17:15b-17; 18:5. And receiving a command to Silas and Timothy to come to him with all speed [to Athens], they departed. While Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry. Therefore he disputed in the synagogue ... and in the market daily. ... When Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia [Phil/Thess+], Paul was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Messiah.

Acts 13:4 (Cyprus). 3) Start at Home

The Word. Acts 1:8. You will be witnesses to me both in Jerusalem ... and to the uttermost part of the earth.

Lu. 8:38-39. Now the man out of whom the devils were departed begged [Jesus] that he might be with him, but Jesus sent him away, saying, "Return to your own house, and show what great things God has done to you."

And Wisdom. Acts 13:4. They, being sent forth by the Holy Spirit, ... sailed to Cyprus.

Acts 4:36. Barnabas, ... [was] a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus.

Acts 21:39. Paul said, "I am a man which am a Jew of Tarsus."

Not everyone should leave their own place to minister. Jesus told the man he healed in the area of the Gadarenes ...

Lu. 8:38-39. Return to your own house, and show how great things God has done to you.

And generally, you should do what you can in your home area before thinking about going farther afield.

Acts 13:2. As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, 'Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.'

Did the Holy Spirit give them more specifics as to what "the work" was? I don't think he needed to. By previous divine revelation, Paul already knew he was called to preach to the Gentiles, and Barnabas and the others knew about it also. That might be what they were fasting and praying about when the Holy Spirit provided the prophecy for them to get started.

Did the Holy Spirit tell them where to go? I don't think so, since the passage avoids mentioning it. Paul and Barnabas had probably already talked many times about wanting to preach the gospel; Paul to Galatia just beyond his home region of Tarsus; and Barnabas to his home island of Cyprus. And Jesus had already given them the principle of starting at home and branching out from there. "You will be witnesses to me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, [etc.]," Acts 1:8.

The Spirit had chosen Barnabas to lead the mission, by mentioning Barnabas first. "Separate me Barnabas and Saul," Acts 13:2. That made Barnabas more responsible, humanly speaking, for the success of the mission. So it was sensible leadership for him to prefer to go to his own home area of Cyprus first, rather than the Galatia area near Paul's home area. Barnabas was already familiar with the island, and had contacts there. There was no need to learn another language or culture.

They didn't go to Paul's home area of Tarsus first, because Paul had already evangelized that area; first for Jews and Jewish proselytes; and then, after Peter opened the door of faith in Jesus to the Gentiles in Acts 10, to God-fearing, synagogue-associated Gentiles in the area. Three years after Paul had been saved at Damascus, he went to Jerusalem.

Acts 9:29-30. He was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem. And he spoke boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians [Hellenized Jews]; but they went about to slay him. Which, when the brethren knew, they ... sent him forth to Tarsus.

Later, when the brethren at Jerusalem wrote to the god-fearing, synagogue-associated Gentiles like Cornelius, about not needing to be circumcised, they wrote ...

Acts 15:23. To the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch Syria, and Syria, and Cilicia [Tarsus+].

So, some of those brethren in Cilicia [Tarsus+] must have been from Paul's ministry in his home area before Barnabas brought him to Antioch.

Wilson. Two obscure references in Acts point to the organization of churches in Cilicia [Tarsus+] at an earlier date [than Paul's first missionary journey in Acts 13]. Among the addressees of the letter drafted by the Jerusalem council were the churches in Cilicia [Tarsus+] (Acts 15:23). Later Paul visited these same churches at the beginning of his second ministry journey (Acts 15:41). Paul's relationship to these churches points to this apostle as their founder. Since his home was the ... city of Tarsus, to which he returned after his conversion (Gal. 1:21; Acts 9:30), Paul was apparently active in church planting during his so-called 'silent years'. The core of these churches undoubtedly consisted of Diaspora Jews who, like Paul's family, lived in the region. Jews from Cilicia [Tarsus+] were members of a Synagogue of the Freedmen in Jerusalem, to which Paul was associated during his time in Jerusalem (Acts 6:9).²⁷

Acts 13:5a (Cyprus). 4) To the Jew First

The Word. Is. 49:6. It is a light thing that you [Messiah] should be my servant to raise up the tribes

of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel. I will also give you for a light to the Gentiles, so that you can be my salvation to the end of the earth.

Acts 1:8. You will be witnesses to me ... [to the Jew first] in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea and in Samaria, and [also to the Gentiles] to the uttermost part of the earth.

Rom. 1:16, 2:10 (the concept, though Romans wasn't written yet). To the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

Rom. 11:24. How much more shall these, which are the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?

Rom. 15:27. The Gentiles have been made 'partakers' [not 'overtakers'] of their [Jewish] spiritual things.

And Wisdom. Acts 13:4-5. So they, being sent forth by the Holy Spirit, ... sailed to Cyprus, and ... preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews.

The first thing Barnabas and Paul did when they got to the island of Cyprus was to preach in the synagogues. After Cyprus, they went to their primary destination, the large city of Antioch Galatia, and they went to the synagogue first.

Acts 13:14-16, 45-46. They came to Antioch in [Galatia], and went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and sat down. And after the reading of the law and the prophets the rulers of the synagogue sent to them, saying, "You men and brethren [Paul must have dressed in Jewish fashion], if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say on." Then

Paul stood up, and beckoning with his hand said, “[etc.]”. But when the Jews ... spoke against those things, ... contradicting and blaspheming, then Paul and Barnabas ... said, “It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you, but seeing you put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.

Although Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles, he went “to the Jew first” (Rom. 1:16, 2:10) in every city he went to. Only after the Jews of each city rejected the gospel, did he go to the Gentiles in that city. As he said in Antioch Galatia ...

Acts 13: 45-46. It was necessary that the word of God should have been spoken to you first.

There were certainly practical advantages to that strategy. Many of the Jews, Gentile proselytes, and synagogue-associated, God-fearing Gentiles were already justified and knew God, and would without fail accept Jesus as Messiah as soon as they heard the gospel message. That’s why the gospel spread so quickly, and such large numbers believed from the initial preaching of the early brethren. Also, it’s easier to talk about the Messiah with people who already acknowledge the authority of the Bible, the Old Testament at that time.

Gager. Paul went to the synagogue because he knew that he would find Gentiles there. Both those called, in Paphos, “devout converts” ... and others who, in Philippi, Thessalonica, and Corinth, are identified as “worshippers of God” ... and, in Antioch, as “those who fear or revere God.” ... In just about every city that Paul visits, Gentiles are present in the synagogue in

significant numbers. ... These Gentiles were not just one-time, drop-in visitors but actual members of the synagogue community in one form or another. ... One of the things we know about these god-fearers is that some of them were major donors to synagogues.[28](#)

But the main reason Paul preached to the Jew first, was theological - to acknowledge the priority God gives the Jewish people. We believing Gentiles aren't jealous that God gives the Jewish people priority, because God has given us humility through the Holy Spirit, and we know that anything anyone receives is by grace.

Jas. 4:6. He gives more grace. Therefore he said, "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble."

The Congregation was entirely Jewish, and Jewish proselyte, up until Acts 10. And even in Acts 15 and beyond, it was hard for the brethren to accept that even Gentiles, as Gentiles, could become part of the Congregation.

Eph. 3:4-6. The mystery of Messiah, ... that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Messiah by the gospel.

In Acts we see Jesus working to maintain the unity of the body, among Jewish and Gentile believers, as the gospel went farther and farther out from Jerusalem, and the Congregation became more and more Gentile in number, simply because most of the world's population is Gentile. This is probably why God chose a Pharisee, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, trained by Gamaliel, to be the apostle to the Gentiles.

Acts 22:3. A Jew, born in Tarsus, ... yet brought up in [Jerusalem] at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers.

Phil. 3:5. Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee.

“To the Jew first” also means Gentiles have the responsibility to give financial priority to support Jewish brethren and missions.

Rom. 15:26-27. It has pleased them of Macedonia [Phil/Thess+] and Achaia [Cor+] to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem. It has pleased them truly, and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their [the Jews] spiritual things, their [the Gentile's] duty is also to minister to them in physical things.

TO THE JEW FIRST IN ACTS (1)	
City/Acts	Scripture
Damascus 9:20	Straightway he preached Messiah in the synagogues.
Jerusalem 9:28-29	He was with them ... at Jerusalem, ... and disputed against the [Hellenized Jews].
Cyprus 13:5	When they were at Salamis, they preached

	the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews.
Antioch (Galatia) 13:14, 46	They came to Antioch in [Galatia], and went into the synagogue on the sabbath day. ... "It was <u>necessary</u> that the word of God should have been spoken first to you, but seeing you put it from you, ... we turn to the Gentiles."
Iconium 13:51, 14:1	They ... came to Iconium, ... and ... went both together into the synagogue of the Jews.
Lystra/ Derbe 14:6-7	(There was probably no synagogue in Lystra and Derbe.)
Philippi 16:13	On the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where [Jewish] prayer was often made [since there was no synagogue in Philippi].
Thessa-lonica 17:1-2	They came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews, and Paul, <u>as his manner was</u> , went in to them, and three sabbath days reasoned

with them out of the scriptures.

TO THE JEW FIRST IN ACTS (2)

City/Acts	Scripture
Berea 17:10	Who, coming [to Berea], went into the synagogue of the Jews.
Athens 17:16-17	While Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to [Gentile] idolatry. [Nevertheless,] therefore he disputed in the synagogue with the Jews.
Corinth 18:1, 4, 6	Paul ... came to Corinth, ... and he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath. ... And when they ... blasphemed, he ... said, ... "From now on I will go to the Gentiles."
Ephesus 19:1, 8	Paul ... came to Ephesus. ... And he went into the synagogue, ... for ... three months. But when some ... spoke evil of that way before the multitude, he ... separated the disciples. [The believers had been meeting in the synagogue services there.]

Rome 28:16-28	When we came to Rome, ... Paul called the chief of the Jews together, ... and ... he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus. ... And ... they departed, after that Paul [said], "Well spoke the Holy Spirit by Isaiah the prophet, ... "Hearing you will hear, and will not understand." ... Therefore ... the salvation of God is sent to the Gentiles, and ... they will hear it.
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Acts 13:5b-13 (Cyprus). 5) On-the-Job Training

The Word. Lu. 6:13. He called to him his disciples, and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles.

And Wisdom. Acts 13:5. They also had John for their minister.

Acts 16:1-3. A certain disciple was there named Timothy. ... Paul wanted to have him to go forth with him.

It's not just that Paul and other Congregation leaders wanted to have someone help them with the more menial tasks of their work so they could expand their own ministry. They also actively sought out men with the most potential to

intern with them as the primary means to train them to grow into a ministry of their own. This method is far more effective than our method of university and seminary training today. It's really a win-win situation: inexpensive help and the best means of training.

Jesus lived and ministered with the twelve apostles to provide them on-the-job-training, and the results were evident.

Acts 4:13. When they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned ... men, ... they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.

The brethren at Antioch Syria sent Barnabas, Paul, and Titus with alms for the brethren in Judaea. When Barnabas and Paul returned to Antioch Syria, they brought Barnabas' nephew [many versions say his cousin] Mark, whose mother's house was a meeting place for the brethren, back with them.

Gal. 2:1. Fourteen years after [the last time I was in Jerusalem], I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also.

Col. 4:10. Mark, the nephew of Barnabas.

Acts 11:29-30. The disciples [in Antioch Syria] ... sent [financial relief] to the elders [in Jerusalem] by the hands of Barnabas and [Paul]. ... When [Peter was freed from prison by an angel], ... he came to the house of Mary the mother of ... Mark, where many [probably including Barnabas, Paul, and Titus] were gathered together praying.

Acts 12:25. Barnabas and [Paul] returned from Jerusalem, ... and took Mark with them.

Titus may have stayed in Jerusalem for awhile to learn from the apostles and elders there. Paul wouldn't have considered Titus a potential candidate for on-the-job-training at this time on his first missionary journey anyway, because Titus being a Gentile could hinder them from preaching in Jewish synagogues. Titus may not have been spiritually mature enough yet either.

So Barnabas and Paul added Mark to their team, to help them, and to give him on-the-job training. Mark went ahead to Cyprus to make arrangements, and Barnabas and Paul met up with him when they arrived there.

Acts 13:5. When they were at [the island of Cyprus], ... they also had [Mark] as their minister.

Even though Paul was a permanent apostle of Jesus Messiah himself, and Barnabas was only a temporary apostle of the Congregation of Antioch Syria, Paul had submitted to on-the-job training under Barnabas, from the time Barnabas introduced him to the brethren in Jerusalem (Acts 9:26-28), and brought him to Antioch Syria (Acts 11:25-26), and they began their first missionary journey (Acts 13:2), up until the time Paul was filled with the Spirit, and took the lead in dealing with Elymas the sorcerer. From that time on, Paul's name was listed before Barnabas'; and listed as "Paul," instead of "Saul."

Acts 13:7-12. The deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus, ... called for Barnabas and Saul [Barnabas is still listed first here], and desired to hear the word of God. But Elymas the sorcerer ... withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith. Then

Saul, who also is called Paul [through the rest of Acts], filled with the Holy Spirit, ... said, ... “You will be blind, not seeing the sun for a season.” And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness, and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand. Then the deputy ... believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord.

After dealing with Elymas, the team, now called “Paul and his company,” left the island of Cyprus to go to Antioch Galatia on the mainland, and Paul’s name was listed before Barnabas’ from then on.

Acts 7:13-16, 43. Now when Paul and his company loosed from [Cyprus], they came ... to Antioch [Galatia], and went into the synagogue on the sabbath day. ... And ... the rulers of the synagogue [invited them to speak]. Then Paul stood up [as the lead speaker now], and ... said, “Men of Israel, and you [Gentiles] that fear God, give audience.” ... Now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious [Gentile] proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas [from now on Paul’s name is listed first].

There were only two exceptions to Paul’s name being listed first after this, both for wise reasons. First, when Paul healed a crippled man in Lystra, the pagans thought Barnabas was Jupiter, because they thought Paul was Mercury, since he was the spokesman. So Paul wisely let Barnabas lead in trying to stop the pagans from sacrificing to them, since Jupiter was considered the greater god, and since it was the priest of Jupiter who was going to offer sacrifice.

Acts 14:11-19. When the people [of Lystra] saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in the speech of Lycaonia, "The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men." And they called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercury, because he was the chief speaker. Then the priest of Jupiter, which was before their city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates, and would have done sacrifice with the people. Which when the apostles [of the Congregation of Antioch Syria], Barnabas and Paul, heard of, they ... ran in among the people, crying out, ... "Sirs, ... we also are men." ... And there came there certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the [fickle] people, and having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead.

And secondly, Paul wisely let Barnabas take the lead in giving their defense at Barnabas' home Congregation in Jerusalem.

Acts 15:12. Then all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul, declaring what miracles and wonders God had worked among the Gentiles by them.

On Paul's second missionary journey, he and Barnabas split up over Paul's refusal to take Mark with them for on-the-job-training again, because Mark had abandoned them after leaving Cyprus.

Acts 13:13. When Paul and his company loosed from [the island of Cyprus], they came to [the mainland], ... and [Mark], departing from them, returned to Jerusalem.

Acts 15:35-39. Barnabas determined to take with them ... Mark. But Paul didn't think it good to take him with them, who departed from them [after Cyprus], and went not with them to the work [in Galatia]. And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other.

Barnabas was doing a good thing in wanting to give his relative Mark (Col. 4:10) another chance. It was in keeping with Barnabas' character of being an encourager, and the meaning of his nickname, "who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, which is, being interpreted, 'The son of consolation,'" (Acts 4:36). But Barnabas was wrong to disobey the apostolic authority of Paul.

How should Barnabas have chosen between two good things, helping his relative Mark or helping Paul? Sometimes the way to decide between two good things is by how specific the commandment is. For example, we are to do good to all men, but other believers have priority. "Let us do good to all men, especially to them who are of the household of faith," Gal. 6:10. Men are to provide financially for relatives, but immediate family has priority. "If any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he ... is worse than an infidel," 1 Tim. 5:8. We are to love all people, but the command for a husband to love his wife specifically, has priority over loving all people in general. But Mark was Barnabas' cousin, not his wife; and it wasn't that Mark's life was in danger or something, so Barnabas should have put his responsibility to the Lord's work first, and submitted to Paul's apostolic authority.

Acts 15:39-40. Barnabas took Mark, and sailed to Cyprus; and Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren to the grace of God.

Barnabas not only sailed to Cyprus, but right out of the book of Acts. He went on his own initiative, whereas the Congregation of Antioch Syria continued to endorse Paul, and his new coworker Silas, as their official representatives, since they were “recommended by the brethren to the grace of God” (Acts 15:40). Barnabas didn’t sail out of the whole New Testament though. He continued to minister independently from Paul. The Corinthians and the Colossians knew of him, for example.

1 Cor. 9:5-6. Have we not authority to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and [Peter]? Or I only, and Barnabas, have not we authority to forbear working?

Col. 4:10. Mark, sister's son to Barnabas, touching whom you received commandments; if he comes to you, receive him. [This is about Mark going to Colossae, but it shows the Colossians already knew Barnabas.]

I’m sure Paul would have loved to give Mark a second chance to prove himself in a less critical situation, but he was right not to risk the Spirit-ordained, primary mission of the brethren in Acts, on someone who was batting 0 for 1. It’s not an inalienable right for anyone who wants to, to go on a missionary journey with an apostle, and there was plenty of other work for Mark to do. Later, after Mark proved himself reliable, Paul did welcome him back as a co-laborer.

Mark later worked with Peter and Silas in Babylon.

1 Pet. 5:12-13. By [Peter’s dictation to] Silas. ... The Congregation that is at Babylon ... salutes you, and so does Mark, my son.

And Mark later worked with Paul while he was a prisoner at Caesarea.

Col. 4:10. Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner salutes you, and Mark, ... touching whom you received commandments, that if he comes to you, receive him.

And while Paul was a prisoner at Rome.

2 Tim. 3:9-11. [Timothy,] do your diligence to come shortly to me [Paul]. ... Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with you, for he is profitable to me for the ministry.

Call to the Ministry?

Paul and Silas picked up another on-the-job-training intern, instead of Mark, when they got to Derbe.

Acts 16:1-3. Then [Paul] came to Derbe; ... and ... a certain disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess, and believed, but his father was a Greek; which was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium. Paul wanted to have him go forth with him, and took and circumcised him, because of the Jews which were in those quarters, for they all knew that his father was a Greek [and Paul didn't want to hinder the ministry].

From the time Paul started his 1st missionary journey in Acts 13, it seems he always had other men travelling and working with him. How many of Paul's co-workers were "called to the ministry?" Apparently only Barnabas. "The Holy Ghost said [probably through a prophet], 'Separate to

me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them,” Acts 13:2.

When they took Mark with them, there’s no indication the Spirit said, “Separate Mark to me for the work,” or for Timothy, “Separate Timothy to me for the work.” Mark and Timothy may have expressed willingness to go on the mission, but Paul and Barnabas did the choosing, based on what they thought was good for the mission.

Paul chose Timothy because he “was well reported of by the brethren” (Acts 16:2). He refused Barnabas’ insistence to bring Mark with them because he “departed from them [after Cyprus], and went not with them to the work” (Acts 15:38). Paul didn’t ask either Mark or Timothy if they ‘felt called’ to join his mission.

Likewise, in Paul’s instructions as to choosing elders and deacons in local Congregations, ‘feeling called’ is never listed as a criterion, which it would be, if it were a valid criterion. Our traditional religious culture and terminology is quite different from what the Bible teaches and describes.

1 Tim. 3:2, 8. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behavior, given to hospitality, apt to teach. ... Likewise the deacons must be grave, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy money.

Titus 1:6-7. If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly. For a bishop must be blameless.

Hornok. I see little emphases in Scripture on a personal individual experience of [a call]. The focus seems to be not on calling but on qualification.²⁹

Griffiths. The emphasis made by Scripture is never upon an individual volunteering or upon his own subjective sense of call, but always upon the initiative of others. Saul goes to Antioch [Syria] because Barnabas takes him there (Acts 11:25-26). ... Later, when Barnabas and Paul parted company, we are told that Barnabas “took Mark” (Acts 15:39) and Paul “chose Silas” (Acts 15:40). ... Subsequently, Paul “wanted” Timothy “to go with him” (Acts 16:3), though we are pointedly reminded that “he was well spoken of by the brethren who were in Lystra and Iconium,” so that the congregations were then consulted and involved in his going out.³⁰

Acts 20:4. There accompanied [Paul] into Asia [Eph+], Sopater of Berea; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy; and of Asia [Eph+], Tychicus and Trophimus.

There is no mention of any of them having felt called. They were appointed by their Congregations. “They are the messengers [‘apostolos’] of the Congregations,” 2 Cor. 8:23.

2 Tim. 4:10-12, 20. Demas has forsaken me, ... and is departed to Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia. Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with you. ... And Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus. ... Erastus abode at Corinth, but Trophimus I have left at Miletus sick.

Where was any record of any of them having been called? The Holy Spirit’s calling of Barnabas and Paul at Antioch Syria in Acts 13:2 was a unique interruption of Jesus into the mission of the Congregation to get the gospel moving

again, from “Judaea ... to the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

To receive direct revelation is to be a prophet. There are no prophets today, because prophets were the “foundation” (Eph. 2:20) of the Congregation. So no one is receiving direct revelation today, so no one can possibly be ‘called’ to the ministry, or missions, or to anything specific today. God has “called us [all] to glory and virtue” (2 Pet. 1:3).

Hornok. We have all heard a pastor tell his congregation that he is waiting on God regarding the next series of sermons to preach. This indicates that he expects some sort of new word from God or feelings-centered brain flash from God before he can minister. Other pastors say that God told them to build a bigger building, or create a new ministry program. The implication is that if the congregation does not follow the pastor’s lead in this area, they are disobeying God. In a November 2003 Christianity Today article entitled, “Mr. Jabez Goes to Africa,” the author relates how [the author of the best-selling book, *The Prayer of Jabez*, and] the founder of Walk Thru the Bible Ministries, Bruce Wilkinson, had a “burning bush” experience at a Wendy’s restaurant while reading a biography of Hudson Taylor. Wilkinson was stunned when he realized that he may have just had a conversation with God, in which he asked, “God, tell me what do you want me to do,” and he sensed God’s reply: “I want you to keep the Great Commission.”³¹

So Wilkinson went to Africa. But he didn’t stay there.

Morgan. Prayer of Jabez author Bruce Wilkinson, ... has quit his ministry focused on defeating HIV/AIDS

and retired from active ministry at age 58. One turning point was the inability of Swaziland's King Mswati III and Wilkinson to agree on a meeting time in New York to discuss Wilkinson's plan to build homes for AIDS orphans. A few days after this "perceived snub," Wilkinson told staff at his Dream for Africa organization that he was stepping down. ... Dream for Africa had hoped to house 10,000 children on a 32,500-acre complex by the end of 2005.³²

Dream for Africa still has a ministry described at heartforafrica.org; but if Wilkerson had not built the work on perceived direct revelation from God, he might still be laboring there despite the difficulties and changes required, or in some other useful endeavor.

Morgan. In late September 2005, [Wilkinson] was to launch the Dream Giver Coach Network to be merged with the American Association of Christian Counselors. But he "pulled the plug on the entire venture," a source closely associated with Wilkinson told CT. "Bruce was quite broken at this time. [Dream for Africa] had physically, emotionally, spiritually, and financially taken a serious toll on Bruce."³³

Acts 13:14 (Antioch Galatia). 6) New Territory

The Word. Is. 52:14-15. The [Gentile] kings will shut their mouths at him, for that which had not been told them they will see, and that which they had not heard they will consider.

Eph. 2:19-20. You ... are built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets.

And Wisdom. Rom. 15:20. I have strived to preach the gospel where Messiah wasn't named.

Acts 13:13-14. When Paul and his company loosed from [the island of Cyprus], ... they came to Antioch in [Galatia].

Paul said he followed the principle of preaching in areas that hadn't yet been evangelized. That's why Paul set his sights successively on Galatia, Corinth, Ephesus, and Spain.

Rom. 15:20-22. I strived to preach the gospel, where Messiah was not named, lest I should build on another man's foundation. ... As it is written, "To whom he was not spoken of, they will see; and they that have not heard, will understand."

Even though Paul had wanted to visit the brethren in Rome for many years, he wasn't able to get there, because he gave it a lower priority. Rome already had believers there, who had heard the gospel while visiting Jerusalem (Acts 2:10), and other believers who went there because it was the capital of the Roman empire. Even after Paul finished evangelizing Galatia, Corinth, and Ephesus, and had handled the new Congregations' problems, the only way he could, in good conscience, visit Rome, was to do so on his way to Spain, another unevangelized area.

Rom. 15:23-32. For which cause also [preaching the gospel where Messiah was not named], I have been much hindered from coming to you [at Rome]. But now having no more place in these parts [having evangelized Galatia, Corinth, and Ephesus], and having a great desire these many years to come to you, whenever I take my journey into Spain [which was still unevangelized], I will come to you [in Rome].

For I trust to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way there [to Spain] by you, if first I am somewhat filled with your company. But now I go to Jerusalem to minister to the saints. ... Therefore, when I have performed this, ... I will come by you into Spain.

Acts 13:14 (Antioch Galatia). 7) Contiguous Territory

The Word. Acts 1:8. You will be witnesses to me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea and in Samaria.

Mt. 19:19. Love your neighbor as yourself.

And Wisdom. Acts 13:13-14. When Paul and his company loosed from [Cyprus], they [went] to Antioch in [Galatia].

After Paul and Barnabas evangelized the island of Cyprus, because it was Barnabas' home area, they went to Galatia on the mainland, because that area was contiguous to the area of Tarsus, which was already evangelized.

Wikipedia. "Use of Interior Lines" is a strategy of warfare based on the fact that lines of movement and communication within an enclosed area are shorter than those on the outside. As the area held by a defensive force shrinks, the advantages increase. Using the strategy of interior lines, a partially surrounded or more centrally disposed force can more easily resupply and redeploy its units, and thus more easily mount a series of quick attacks at multiple locations. In the context of battlefield tactics, it allows more rapid concentration of

resources (firepower and manpower) and so affords greater tactical flexibility.³⁴

After Paul revisited the area of Tarsus and Galatia on his second missionary journey, he intended to go to Ephesus, because that was the next contiguous large population center. But the Spirit didn't let him go southwest to Ephesus, or northeast to Bithynia bordering the Black Sea, so he went northwest to Troas, a seaport. That's when he saw the vision of the man from Macedonia [Phil/Thess+], saying, "Come over and help us."

Acts 16:6-10. When [Paul, Silas, and Timothy] had gone throughout ... the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Spirit [probably through the prophecy of Silas, Acts 15:32] to preach the word in Asia [Eph+], ... they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit didn't allow them. And they ... came down [i.e., away from Jerusalem] to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. There stood a man of Macedonia [Phil/Thess+], and asked him, saying, "Come over ... and help us." And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavored to go into Macedonia [Phil/Thess+], assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us [a rare specific call even for the apostles] to preach the gospel to them.

The Holy Spirit only provided divine revelation at that point, because Jesus wanted Paul to do something contrary to normal wise principles and strategies. He wanted him to temporarily skip the contiguous area of Ephesus, and go to the next area of Greece.

Perhaps it wouldn't have been safe for Paul to go to Ephesus yet. Perhaps Jesus wanted Paul to meet Aquilla and Priscilla in Corinth first, so they could lay the foundation of

the Ephesian ministry, as they eventually did. The famous “Macedonian Call,” (Macedonia being the northern Greece region of Philippi and Thessalonica), was the exception, that proves the rule, that at all other times, Paul went into contiguous territory, according to wisdom.

Waltke. The apostle Paul took the gospel message to much of Asia Minor without ever having a specific divine intervention. When he did experience a special revelation, seeing a vision of a man calling him to Macedonia [Phil/Thess+], he obeyed. But the special revelation of God was a rare and unique experience, even for Paul. ... Special revelation for guidance was not the normal apostolic experience. And at the time it was received (by Paul, by Philip, by Peter as he lay on his roof) it was not being sought. ... Special revelation came at a time when God wanted to lead them apart from the normal ways in which His people make choices.³⁵

Having desires to do good things doesn’t constitute a call or guidance from God. “They ... were forbidden of the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia [Eph+]” (Acts 16:6), even though they desired to evangelize there.

Hornok. Paul’s good desire of taking the gospel to Asia [Eph+] (Acts 16:7), his desire to visit the saints at Thessalonica (1 Thess 2:17-18) and Rome (Rom 1:13), while commendable, did not work out because of over-riding circumstances. Good desires are just that - good desires. They are not ... a sign or message from God that we must pursue. ... When we seem to have an original or fresh idea come to mind, it should not be construed as new revelation directly from God, though a Christian song writer may say, “God gave me this song,” or a Bible teacher may say, “God

gave me this idea or insight.” ... There are only two references to [being ‘led by the Spirit’] in the life of the believer: Rom. 8:14, “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God,” and Gal 5:18, “But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.” ... Both passages contrast the lifestyle of fleshly desires with the lifestyle of godly living. Choosing a godly lifestyle is equivalent to being led by the Spirit.³⁶

Acts 13:14 (Antioch Galatia). 8) Focus on Cities

The Word. Mk. 1:38. [Jesus] said to them, “Let’s go into the next towns, that I may preach there also; for therefore I came forth.”

Mt. 9:36. When [Jesus] saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they ... were ... as sheep having no shepherd.

Jon. 4:10-11. You [Jonah] had pity on the gourd, ... which came up in a night, and perished in a night. And should not I [God], spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than a hundred and twenty thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand, and also much cattle?

And Wisdom. Acts 13:14. They came to Antioch in [Galatia].

Paul always headed to the most populous, influential cities in each region he went to. He preferred cities with synagogues, so he could preach ‘to the Jew first,’ and so could gather those who were already believers under the

old covenant, into the Congregation. And he preferred cities with Roman status and government offices, so he had some level of protection, or at least consistency. He only evangelized smaller towns, like Lystra and Derbe, when he was fleeing persecution.

Acts 14:1, 5-7. In Iconium, ... when there was an assault made both of the Gentiles, and also of the Jews with their rulers, to use them despitefully, and to stone them, they were aware of it, and fled to Lystra and Derbe, ... and to the region that lies round about, and there they preached the gospel.

If they had gone further east than Lystra and Derbe, they would have run into Cilicia [Tarsus+], where Paul had already evangelized; or into Commagene, which was an unpredictable region.

Unger. [Paul] and Barnabas did not extend their endeavors beyond this significant boundary [of Lystra and Derbe] into the kingdom of Commagene, under Antiochus, who, although a Roman vassal, was independent. Paul's labors were confined to the centers of Graeco-Roman culture, and his strategy did not comprehend a dubious field where kings [protected cults and had independence from Rome]. Paul manifested careful planning and concentration of effort in his missionary work in Asia Minor and was guided by principles that pointed his endeavors toward an immediate as well as long-range realization of success.³⁷

On Paul's second missionary journey, Philippi was a sure target for their work, because it was a large city with Roman colony status.

Acts 16:12. From there to Philippi, which is the chief city of that [region], and a [Roman] colony.

Even in Roman cities like Philippi, they suffered persecution. But after they were beaten, and jailed, and asked to leave Philippi, they skipped the smaller towns of Amphipolis and Apollonia, as they headed toward the next major city.

Acts 17:1. When they had passed through [skipping] Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica.

When they were persecuted in Thessalonica, they went to the next city.

Acts 17:5-10. The Jews which didn't believe ... set all the city in an uproar. ... And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night to Berea.

Paul, broke his pattern of moving from city to city, when he stayed in Corinth, the main city in southern Greece, for an extended period, because he received direct revelation to do so. In a vision, Jesus promised Paul safety, so he could reach the many people Jesus had there; some that already believed in God under the old covenant, and some who would newly believe through the gospel.

Acts 18:1, 9-11. Paul ... came to Corinth. ... Then the Lord spoke to Paul ... by a vision, ... "Be not afraid, but speak, and don't hold your peace. ... No man will set on you to hurt you, for I have much people in this city." And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

And Paul extended his stay in Corinth even longer than the year and six months mentioned above, because the Roman

ruler provided additional safety from Jewish persecution, and thus additional opportunity, there.

Acts 18:12-18. When Gallio was the deputy of Achaia [Cor+], the Jews made insurrection with one accord against Paul, and brought him to the judgment seat, saying, "This fellow persuades men to worship God contrary to the law." And when Paul was now about to open his mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, ... "If it be a question of words and names, and of your law, you look to it; for I will be no judge of such matters." And he drove them from the judgment seat. Then all the Greeks took Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and beat him before the judgment seat. And Gallio cared for none of those things. And Paul after this tarried there yet a good while.

Ephesus was the major city of the western part of Asia Minor; so Ephesus became Paul's next base of operations.

Acts 19:9-10. Paul ... came to Ephesus, ... disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus. And this continued by the space of two years, so that all they which dwelt in Asia [Eph+] heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.

Luter. Ephesus had grown to become the fourth largest city in the Roman Empire. ... In-depth, heart-inflaming education can ignite widespread, life-transforming evangelism, with afar-reaching cultural impact. A huge and rapidly expanding number of profoundly changed lives in Ephesus and the surrounding province (19:26) brought about such a huge "disturbance" (19:23, NIV) to the societal status quo that an angry riot ensued (19:28-40).³⁸

The “seven Congregations which are in Asia,” addressed in Revelation 2-3 (Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamon, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea), all grew out of Paul’s ministry in Ephesus. Paul also wrote the epistles of Colossians and Philemon to recipients in the same area.

Acts 13:50-52 (Antioch Galatia). 9) Flee Persecution

The Word. Mt. 10:16. Whoever will not ... hear your words, when you depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet. ... Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves; therefore be as wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. ... When they persecute you in this city, flee into another.

And Wisdom. Acts 13:50-51. The Jews [of Antioch Galatia] stirred up the devout and honorable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their borders. But they shook off the dust of their feet against them, and came to Iconium.

When Paul was persecuted, he didn’t try to make a stand; he fled. As in fighting sin, we are to stand against some things, like false doctrine, and flee other things, like sexual temptation.

Stand Against False Doctrine. Eph. 6:12-14. We don’t wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities. ... Therefore, take to you the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to withstand in the evil day. And having done all to stand, stand therefore!

Flee Sexual Temptation. 2 Tim. 2:22. Flee ... youthful lusts.

Gen. 39:11-12. Joseph went into the house to do his [necessary household overseer] business; and there was none of the men of the house there within. And [his master's wife] caught him by his garment, saying, "Lie with me!" And he left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out.

There was a general pattern Paul experienced in the cities he evangelized. 1) Preach to the Jews, 2) preach to the Gentiles, 3) flee persecution, 4) repeat.

PAUL'S OFT-REPEATED PATTERN IN ACTS				
Region	City	Preach to the Jews	Preach to the Gentiles	Flee Persecution
Galatia	Antioch	13:14-43	13:44-49	13:50-51
	Iconium	14:1a	14:1b-4	14:5-6
	Lystra	no synag.	14:6-18	14:19-20
	Derbe	no synag.	14:21	no persec.
Macedonia	Philippi	16:12-15	16:16-18	16:19-40
	Thessalonica	17:1-4a	17:4b	17:5-10a
	Berea	17:10b-12a	17:12b	17:13-15

Achaia	Athens	17:15-17a	17:17b-34	no persec.
	Corinth	18:1-8a	18:8b-18	no persec.
Ephesus	Ephesus	18:19-19:8	19:9-22	19:23-20:1

Luke often skipped over the details of the persecutions Paul suffered. He said the Jews and others, “raised persecution, ... and expelled them” (Acts 13:50) in Antioch Galatia, and “when there was an assault made, ... they were aware of it, and fled” (Acts 14:5-6) in Iconium. But Timothy and the others from that area knew more than Luke chose to record.

2 Tim. 3:10-11. You have fully known my ... persecutions [and] afflictions, which came to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured.

One of the worst things Paul probably endured was when he was stoned and left for dead at Lystra. After what Paul suffered in Galatia during his first missionary journey, he wrote to the Galatians, “From now on let no man trouble me; for I bear in my body the marks [scars, branding] of the Lord Jesus,” Gal. 6:17.

Acts 14:13-21a (Lystra). 10) Preach!

The Word. Mk. 16:15. [Jesus] said to them, “Go into all the world, and preach [κηρύσσω, kyrusso] the gospel [εὐαγγέλιον, evangelion] to every creature.”

1 Cor. 1:17. Messiah didn't send me to baptize, but to preach-the-gospel [εὐαγγελίζω, evangelidzo, evangelize]; not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Messiah should be made of no effect.

And Wisdom. Acts 14:6-7. They ... fled to Lystra and Derbe, ... and there they preached-the-gospel [εὐαγγελίζω, evangelidzo, evangelized].

Jesus commanded the brethren to preach. It's a myth that we can just live a good life in front of unbelievers and they will be attracted to the gospel. Unless they hear or read the words of the gospel, they can't be saved.

Rom. 10:13-17. Whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved. How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how will they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? ... As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!" ... Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

The only exception to this, is that a believing wife isn't supposed to preach to her unbelieving husband.

1 Pet. 3:1-2. You wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; so that, if any obey not the word, they may also without the word be won by the behavior of the wives, while they behold your chaste behavior coupled with fear.

'Preaching' and 'teaching' aren't the same thing, and we shouldn't use the words interchangeably. 'Preaching' means 'to make an announcement,' like we might make a wedding announcement, and is translated from Greek words like

‘κηρύσσω, kyrusso,’ and ‘εὐαγγελίζω, evangelidzo.’ ‘Teaching’ means what we think of by teaching, and is translated from Greek words like ‘διδάσκω, didasko.’

For example, Jesus preached, or announced, that the kingdom was at hand; but he taught about the law in the synagogues (since that’s all you were allowed to teach in the synagogues).

Mt. 4:17, 23. From that time, Jesus began to preach [κηρύσσω, kyrusso, announce] and to say, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!” ... Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching [διδάσκω, didasko] in their synagogues, and preaching [κηρύσσω, kyrusso, announcing] the gospel [good news!] of the kingdom.

The KJV translators did well to base their New Testament translation on the Byzantine family of Greek manuscripts, instead of the corrupt Alexandrian family the new versions are based on. But their religious baggage made them sloppy in translating Greek words into ‘preach.’ They said Paul ‘preached’ all night in Troas, but you don’t make an announcement all night to believers; you teach them, or address them.

Acts 20:7-9. On the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached to [No, he διαλέγομαι, dialegomai, addressed] them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight. ... And there sat in a window a certain young man named Eutychus, ... and as Paul was long preaching [No, διαλέγομαι, dialegomai, talking], he sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead.

The topics of Paul's preaching, i.e. announcing, are listed in the following table.

TOPICS OF PAUL'S PREACHING IN ACTS (1)	
Messiah is the Son of God	Acts 9:20. Straightway he preached [κηρύσσω, kyrusso] <u>Messiah</u> in the synagogues, that he <u>is the Son of God</u> .
The Word of God	Acts 13:5. At Salamis, they preached [καταγγέλλω, katangelo] <u>the word of God</u> in the synagogues of the Jews.
	Acts 15:35-36. Paul ... and Barnabas continued in Antioch [Syria], teaching and preaching [εὐαγγελίζω, evangelidzo] <u>the word of the Lord</u> Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached [καταγγέλλω, katangelo] <u>the word of the Lord</u> ."
	Acts 17:13. <u>The word of God</u> was preached [καταγγέλλω, katangelo] of Paul at Berea.

TOPICS OF PAUL'S PREACHING IN ACTS (2)	
Jesus and the	Acts 13:31-32. We declare-glad-tidings [εὐαγγελίζω,

Resurrection	evangelidzo, evangelize] to you, how that the promise ... made to the fathers, God has fulfilled ... in that he has <u>raised up Jesus</u> again.
	Acts 17:3. <u>Jesus</u> , whom I preach [καταγγέλλω, katangelo] to you.
	Acts 19:13. <u>Jesus</u> , whom Paul [κηρύσσω, kyrusso] preaches.
	Acts 17:18. Some said, ... “He seems to be a setter forth [καταγγελεύς, katangeleus, heralder] of strange gods,” because he preached [εὐαγγελίζω, evangelidzo] to them <u>Jesus and the resurrection</u> .
Baptism of Repentance	Acts 13:34. John had first preached before [προκηρύσσω, pro-kyrusso] ... <u>the baptism of repentance</u> to all the people of Israel.
Forgiveness of Sins	Acts 13:38. Through this man is preached [καταγγέλλω, katangelo] to you <u>the forgiveness of sins</u> .

TOPICS OF PAUL’S PREACHING IN ACTS (3)	
The	Acts 14:7. They ... fled to

Gospel	Lystra and Derbe, ... and there they <u>preached -the-gospel</u> [εὐαγγελίζω, evangelidzo, evangelized].
	Acts 14:21. When they had <u>preached-the-gospel</u> [εὐαγγελίζω, evangelidzo, evangelized] to [Derbe], and had disciplined many, they returned again to Lystra, ... Iconium, and Antioch [Galatia].
	Acts 16:10. After ... the vision, ... we endeavored to go into Macedonia [Phil/Thess+], assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us to <u>preach-the-gospel</u> [εὐαγγελίζω, evangelidzo, evangelize] to them.
Turn to God from Idols	Acts 14:15. We ... preach [εὐαγγελίζω, evangelidzo] to you that you should <u>turn from these vanities</u> [of idols] <u>to the living God</u> .
Salvation	Acts 16:17. These men ... show [καταγγέλλω, katangelo] to us <u>the way of salvation</u> .

TOPICS OF PAUL'S PREACHING IN ACTS (4)	

God	Acts 17:23. I found an altar ... to “The Unknown <u>God</u> .” Whom therefore you ignorantly worship, I declare him [καταγγέλλω, katangelo] to you.
The Kingdom of God	Acts 20:25. You ... among whom I’ve gone preaching [κηρύσσω, kyrusso] <u>the kingdom of God</u> , shall see my face no more.
	Acts 28:31. Paul ... received all that came in to him, preaching [κηρύσσω, kyrusso] <u>the kingdom of God</u> , and teaching [διδάσκω, didasko] those things which concern the Lord Jesus Messiah.
Light	Acts 26:23. That Messiah would suffer, ... be the first that would rise from the dead, and would show [καταγγέλλω, katangelo] <u>light</u> to the people [Israel] and to the Gentiles.

Can you imagine Paul going into a city like Ephesus, and setting up a drug rehabilitation ministry? He didn’t even have to pray about it. “Father, should I set up a drug rehabilitation ministry here?” He already knew from the Word that had previously been revealed to him that he should focus on the gospel; and so should we.

These kinds of things aren’t the mission of the Congregation. They should be done by individuals and

groups of individuals of the Congregation as part of their personal ministries to be salt and light in the world as they live out the love of God in their families and in society. But the Congregation needs to preach the gospel and teach the brethren. Paul preached the gospel, his helpers baptized those who believed, and he taught them. There was no time for anything else. Go, preach, baptize, teach, repeat!

Grudem. How does the book of Acts tell us that the Church grew? In Acts 6:7, “the word of God increased.” In Acts 12:24, “the word of God grew and multiplied.” In Acts 13:49, “the word of the Lord spread throughout all the region.” In Acts 19:20, “the word of the Lord grew and prevailed mightily.”³⁹

Acts 14:21c-22 (Galatia). 11) Defense Before Offense

The Word. Jn. 17:12. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in your name. Those that you gave me I have kept, and none of them is lost, except the son of perdition, that the scripture might be fulfilled.

And Wisdom. Acts 14:21-22. When they had preached the gospel [in Derbe], and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch Galatia, confirming the souls of the disciples and exhorting them.

When Paul reached the furthest point of his first missionary journey, the area of Derbe, he and Barnabas retraced their steps to solidify their gains before returning to Antioch Syria. And every time Paul began a new missionary journey, he first stopped to strengthen the Congregations along the way in the areas he had already evangelized.

When Paul started his second missionary journey, the primary purpose was to protect the gains he and Barnabas had already made, though I'm sure Paul had also thought about possibly going further after accomplishing that objective.

Acts 15:36. Paul said to Barnabas, "Let's go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do."

So Paul started his second missionary journey defensively.

Acts 15:41-16:6. [Paul] went through Syria and Cilicia [Tarsus+], confirming the Congregations. Then he came to Derbe and Lystra [where he added Timothy to his group]. ... And as they went through the cities, they delivered the decrees for them to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem. And so the Congregations were established in the faith, and increased in number daily. Now when they had gone throughout ... the region of Galatia, [then and only then did they finally continue on into new territory].

And when Paul went on his third missionary journey, ...

Acts 18:23, 19:1. After he had spent some time [at Antioch Syria], he departed, and went over all the country of Galatia ... in order, strengthening all the disciples. ... [Only after that,] Paul, having passed through the upper borders, came to Ephesus.

Merkle. Do we press on "full steam ahead" and put all our forces on the front lines in order to engage more and more unreached people groups? Or do we spend time and energy fortifying and strengthening

the progress we have already made so that the enemy does not steal the fruit of our labor? ... As the apostle to the Gentiles, [Paul's] ... desire was to press on into new territories expanding the kingdom of God - not only numerically, but also geographically. ... However, ... Paul did not simply move on and abandon his previous works. ... Paul's great concern for the ongoing need of missionary involvement in the churches he previously planted [is] a model for the need for theological education in missions. Eckhard Schnabel rightly explains: ... "He repeatedly visited the churches that he had established in Galatia, [and Greece]; he stayed for several years in Corinth and in Ephesus; he took time to write letters, to train new workers whom he sent to the existing churches with various tasks. Paul's main concern evidently was not to reach as many people as quickly as possible with the gospel. He spared no effort, time and energy in safeguarding the consolidation of his missionary successes." Paul's mission strategy of continuing to strengthen his churches will be shown by (1) his practice of revisiting churches, (2) his practice of writing letters to churches, and (3) his practice of sending co-workers to churches.⁴⁰

Marketing wisdom says it's more expensive to acquire new customers than to retain old ones. "Make new friends, but keep the old. One is silver, the other gold." And, "A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city; and their contentions are like the bars of a castle" (Prov. 18:19).

In the game of Risk, the attacker rolls one less dice than the defender, when they have the same amount of men, to represent the advantages of defense, and the increased costs of offense. Paul knew he was multiplying his ministry many times over, by sustaining the existing Congregations,

and keeping them reaching out to others, rather than going from area to area prematurely, and gradually losing everything he had achieved in each area.

At the end of his third missionary journey, when he came to Troas, God blessed him with an open door to preach. But Paul didn't count it as guidance, only opportunity. Instead of going through the open door at Troas, he went to Philippi seeking Titus. He preferred to lose an opportunity to preach the gospel, than to lose anyone who was already a believer, especially one he also had great personal affection for, and which expanded his own ministry.

2 Cor. 2:12-13. When I came to Troas to preach Messiah's gospel, and a door was opened to me of the Lord, I had no rest in my spirit, because I found not Titus my brother; but taking my leave of them, I went from there into Macedonia [Phil/Thess+] [seeking him].

After Paul walked away from the open door in Troas, he went to Macedonia [Phil/Thess+], and spent an extended period in Corinth, to edify and strengthen the brethren through his teaching.

Acts 20:1-3. Paul ... departed to go into Macedonia [Phil/Thess+]. And when he had gone over those parts, and had given them much exhortation, he came to Greece, and abode there three months.

Acts 14:23 (Galatia). 12) Plant Congregations

The Word. Mt. 16:18. Upon this rock I will build my Congregation.

Acts 1:1. The former treatise I have made ... of all that Jesus began ... to do.

And Wisdom. Acts 14:23. They ... ordained them elders in every Congregation.

1 Ths. 1:1. Paul, Silas, and Timothy, to the Congregation of the Thessalonians.

Wherever Paul evangelized, he planted Congregations. And unless he had to flee because of persecution, he didn't leave until he ordained elders in the new Congregations. Only after ...

Acts 14:23, 26. They had ordained them elders in every Congregation, [then] ... they ... sailed to Antioch Syria, from where they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled.

How did they find spiritually mature men in newly evangelized places? Because there were many Jews, Jewish proselytes, and God-fearing, synagogue-associated Gentiles who had already been saved by trusting in God and his word under the Old Covenant, who believed the message of the gospel about Jesus Messiah as soon as they heard it without fail. For example, Timothy had probably been saved as a child, through the Old Testament teaching of his Jewish mother and grandmother, though he didn't hear the gospel until later.

2 Tim. 1:5. When I remember the unfeigned faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois, and your mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that [is] in you also.

2 Tim. 3:15. From a child you have known the holy scriptures, which are able to make you wise to salvation through faith which is in Messiah Jesus.

CONGREGATIONS PLANTED BY PAUL			
Jour- ney	Region /City	Epistle To	Elders and Deacons
1	<u>Galatia</u> Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe	Galatians	They ... ordained ... elders in every Congregation. Acts 14:20- 23. The Congregations of Galatia. Gal. 1:1-2.
2	<u>Greece</u> Philippi, Thess., Berea, Corinth	Phil. 1, 2 Thess. 1, 2 Cor.	With the [elders] and deacons. Phil. 1:1.
3	Ephesus	Ephesians Colossians Philemon 1, 2 Tim.	[Paul] sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the Congregation. Acts 20:17. At Ephesus; ... an [elder] ... must be blameless; ... deacons ...

Acts 14:26-28 (To Antioch Syria). 13) ***Keep in Touch***

The Word. Mt. 15:4. Honor your father and mother.

And Wisdom. Acts 14:26. [They] sailed to Antioch Syria, from where they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled.

Every time before Paul started another missionary journey, he returned to the Congregation at Jerusalem, because he recognized the priority of the Jews in the Congregation; and to the Congregation at Antioch Syria, where his missionary journeys had started.

After the 1st missionary journey, and before beginning the 2nd one, ...

Acts 14:26-28. [They] sailed to Antioch Syria, from where they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled. And when they came, and had gathered the Congregation together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles. And they stayed there a long time with the disciples.

And after the 2nd missionary journey, and before beginning the 3rd one to Ephesus, ...

Acts 18:18-22. Paul ... took his leave of the brethren, and sailed [from Corinth] to Syria. ... And when he had landed [near Jerusalem], and gone up [i.e., to Jerusalem, which is always 'up'], and saluted the

Congregation, he went down [i.e., away from Jerusalem] to Antioch Syria.

Finally, after the 3rd missionary journey, and before beginning the 4th one to Rome, ...

Acts 21:1-20. After we [left the Ephesian elders, we], ... sailed into Syria, ... for there the ship was to unlade her burden, ... and went up [always up] to Jerusalem. ... And the day following Paul went in with us to James; and all the elders were present. And ... he declared particularly what things God had worked among the Gentiles by his ministry. And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord.

Paul wasn't able to go from Jerusalem to visit the Congregation in Antioch Syria this time, because he was arrested and put in prison while he was at the temple in Jerusalem.

Acts 15:1-35. The Situation in Antioch Syria

Up until Acts 10, the Congregation was entirely Jewish, including Hebraic Jews and Gentile proselytes (Acts 2), Hellenistic Jews (Acts 6), and Samaritans (Acts 8). The Jewish brethren continued whatever degree of Jewish dress, keeping Kosher, and keeping the Jewish feasts each observed before they believed on Yeshua. God sent Peter to preach to the synagogue-associated Gentiles, Cornelius, and his friends, in Acts 10; and then Peter had to defend himself for doing so.

Soon afterwards, many Hellenistic Jews and synagogue-associated Gentiles in Antioch Syria heard the gospel and believed, so the Congregation at Jerusalem sent Barnabas to check it out, and Barnabas brought Paul from Tarsus to help him there (Acts 11:19-26). During that time, it was prophesied by Agabus, that there would be a great famine, so the Congregation at Antioch Syria sent Barnabas and Paul to Jerusalem with an offering. Paul took Titus, a synagogue-associated Gentile, possibly from Antioch Syria, with him, so that he could confront the issue early and in private with the apostles, before he ever went on his mission to Galatia.

Gal. 2:1-9. Then, fourteen years [after my last visit to Jerusalem], I went up [ALWAYS 'UP,' even during our current age after Messiah's death and resurrection] again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also. And I went up by revelation [Agabus' prophecy of Acts 11:28], and communicated to them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles [in the areas of Tarsus and Antioch Syria], but privately

to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain. But ... Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, wasn't compelled to be circumcised, [in spite] of false brethren ... who came in secretly to spy out our liberty which we have in Messiah Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage; to whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you [Gentiles in general, since he hadn't met the Galatians yet]. ... And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given to me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcision.

It was wise of Paul to talk with the leaders James, Peter, and John privately first, about his message to the Gentiles. If he had let the brethren in general know about it first, he may have been reprimanded by the leaders, which could have severely hindered the acceptance of him and his message.

Why did Peter and the other apostles agree to let Paul bear the mission to the Gentiles when they knew they were all mandated to "be witnesses to me ... to the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8)? Because although they all had a mission to the Gentiles, Paul especially had a mission to the Gentiles. The others eventually did go out into the diaspora. Peter wrote an epistle from the Jewish communities in Babylon, to the Jewish believers in Asia Minor.

1 Pet. 1:1; 5:12-13. Peter, an apostle of Jesus Messiah, to the [Jewish] strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia [Eph+], and Bithynia. ... The Congregation that is at Babylon ... salutes you.

And the apostle John eventually went to Ephesus, and wrote to “the seven Congregations which are in Asia [Eph+]” (Rev. 1:11), while in exile on “the island [of] Patmos” (Rev. 1:9) in the Aegean Sea.

Non-synagogue associated Gentiles first began believing during Paul’s 1st missionary journey to Galatia.

Acts 13:44. The next sabbath day almost the whole city [including the non-synagogue associated Gentiles, of Antioch Galatia] came together to hear the word of God.

When Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch Syria, after completing their 1st missionary journey, they reported that ...

Acts 14:27. God ... had opened the door of faith to the [non-synagogue associated] Gentiles.

After that, Peter visited the Congregation in Antioch Syria, and ate with the Gentile believers there, as he had eaten with Cornelius and his Gentile friends in Acts 10. But then some men came from Judea and taught that to stay Kosher, the Jewish brethren shouldn’t eat with the Gentiles unless they become Jewish proselytes.

Acts 15:1. And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, “Unless you are circumcised [ceremonially], after the manner of Moses, you can’t be saved.

Peter, Barnabas, and the other Jewish brethren then imitated the example of the teachers from Judaea, and ate at separate tables from the Gentile brethren. If this practice had been allowed to continue, it would have resulted in

Gentile believers being pressured to become Jewish proselytes in order to be full members of the Congregation.

Gal. 2:11-13. When Peter came to Antioch Syria, I [Paul] withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. Because before certain [teachers] came from James [but not sent by James], he did eat with the Gentiles, but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. And the other Jews disassembled likewise with him, insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their disassembling.

Waltke. Make your decision in light of Scripture. ... When ... men from Jerusalem arrived [in Antioch Syria], [Peter] stopped eating certain foods ... and separated himself from the Gentile Christians. ... Paul saw that Peter was following human reason and disobeying God's Word. He was putting on a show for the benefit of the observers.[41](#)

Acts 15:36-18:18. Corinth



These three chapters recount Paul's second missionary journey. Paul went with Silas instead of Barnabas because of a disagreement over Mark. Paul began the journey with the stated intention of revisiting the Congregations they established in Galatia on the first missionary journey; but after revisiting those Congregations, he kept going on further west towards the next contiguous major city of Ephesus. But Jesus intervened and sent him to Greece instead; Philippi and Thessalonica in the north, and Corinth in the south.

Acts 16:12-15 (Philippi). 14) Baptize!

The Word. Mt. 28:19. Having gone therefore, disciple all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

And Wisdom. Acts 8:36-38. They came to some water, and the eunuch said, "See, here is water. What hinders me to be baptized?" And Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he

answered, ... “I believe that Jesus Messiah is the Son of God.” And ... they both went down into the water, ... and he baptized him.

Acts 16:30-34. [The Philippian jailer] brought them out, and said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” And they said, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Messiah, and you will be saved.” ... And they spoke to him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes, and was baptized, he and all his, straightway.

Freeman. Baptism must be in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, ... [yet] nowhere in Acts is anyone baptized with these words. Acts records the use of the name “Jesus Christ” (Ac 2:38; 8:16; 10:48; 19:5; cf. Ro 6:3; Gal 3:27) and “the Lord Jesus” (Ac 8:16; 19:5). ... There is no reason to believe that the phrase was ever intended as a formula in the sense that every word had to be repeated exactly as it is stated here. ... If ... Jesus did believe himself to be uniquely and eternally related to the Father and to the Spirit, ... then there is a solid basis for what became the doctrine of the Trinity.⁴²

There is no mention in the Bible of believers ever waiting until after a period of teaching before being baptized, like most Congregations force on new believers today.

Acts 16:15 (Philippi). 15) Meet With the Brethren

The Word. Jn. 13:35. By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one to another.

And Wisdom. Acts 16:15. And when [Lydia] was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house, and abide there." And she constrained us.

Paul thought of himself, first and foremost, as a brother, and a servant of Jesus Messiah, like all believers, before he considered himself an apostle of Jesus Messiah.

Rom. 1:1. Paul, a servant of Jesus Messiah, called to be an apostle.

Paul often met with new brethren to lay hands on them so they would receive spiritual gifts; and to teach them, so they would be edified. But it was equally important to Paul, to meet with believers so he himself would be refreshed, comforted, and strengthened.

Rom. 1:9-12. I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, to the end you may be established; that is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.

Rom. 15:29-32. I am sure that, when I come to you, I will come in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Messiah. ... I [hope to] come to you with joy by the will of God, and ... with you be refreshed.

2 Cor. 2:1-2. I determined this with myself, that I would not come again to you in heaviness. For if I make you sorry, who is he then that makes me glad, but the same which is made sorry by me?

When Paul travelled through a city or town that had believers, he didn't take the opportunity to visit the tourist attractions, or check out the best restaurants, or take in a

show. He met with the brethren, and lodged with them when possible, as we see on his last journey to Jerusalem, before his imprisonment and transfer to Rome.

Acts 21:3-18. We ... sailed into Syria, and landed at Tyre, for the ship was to unload her cargo there. And finding disciples, we tarried there seven days. ... And when we had accomplished those days, we departed and went our way, and they all brought us on our way, with wives and children, till we were out of the city; and we kneeled down on the shore, and prayed. And when we had taken our leave one of another, we took ship, and they returned home again. And when we had finished our course from Tyre, we came to Ptolemais, and greeted the brethren, and abode with them one day. And the next day, we that were of Paul's company departed, and came to Caesarea. And we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the [original] seven [deacons]; and stayed with him. And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy. ... And after those days we took up our carriages, and went up [always 'up'] to Jerusalem. There went with us also certain of the disciples of Caesarea, and brought with them one Mnason of Cyprus, an old disciple, with whom we would lodge. And when we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly.

HOSTS AND HOSTESSES OF PAUL		
City	Host/Hostess	References
Philippi	Lydia	Acts 16:15
Thessalonica	Jason	Acts 17:7
Corinth, 1st	Prisca &	Acts 18:3

Visit	Aquila	
Corinth, 3rd Visit	Gaius	Acts 20:2-3; Rom. 16:23
Caesarea	Philip	Acts 21:8
Jerusalem	Mnason	Acts 21:16

POSSIBLE HOSTS AND HOSTESSES OF PAUL		
City	Host/Hostess	References
Jerusalem	Mary, Mark's Mother	Acts 12:12; 11:30; 12:25
Derbe	Eunice, Timothy's Mother	Acts 16:12; 2 Tim. 1:5
Ephesus	Prisca & Aquilla	Acts 19:8 ,10; 18:18-19
Ephesus?	Rufus' Mother	Acts 19:8 ,10; Rom. 16:13

Acts 16:16-24. Forbidden Forms of Seeking Guidance

The Word. Jer. 23:16 KJV. They speak a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the Lord. Jer. 23:16 NET. They are reporting visions of their own imaginations, not something the Lord has given them to say.

And Wisdom. Acts 16:16-18. A certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying, ... [and she] followed Paul ... saying, "These men are the servants of the most high God!" ... But Paul ... said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Messiah to come out of her." And he came out.

The demon-possessed girl that followed Paul around in Philippi, announcing they were servants of the most high God, was theologically correct, but was distracting people from the message, like so-called miracles do today. And it was bad press, coming as it was from a demon. Paul cast the spirit out, and her masters lost the financial benefit of her fortune telling, and had Paul and Silas arrested, beaten, and imprisoned.

The Greek says the girl had a spirit of "Πύθωνα [pythona, Python]" which the KJV translated as "divination" (Acts 16:16). In Greek mythology, Python was the serpent, or dragon, that guarded the oracle at Delphi. The high priestess there was called the Pythia, and people came to her for direct revelation from Apollo specific to their circumstances for their decision making.

Wikipedia. The Pythia was ... widely credited for her prophecies inspired by being 'filled by the spirit of the god' (or enthusiasmos) [from 'ἐν (en, in) θεός (theos, God) and οὐσία (ousia, substance)].⁴³ 'Enthusiasm' ... was originally used to refer to a person possessed by a god.⁴⁴

Benjamin Doolittle, published a pamphlet in 1743, entitled "An Enquiry Into Enthusiasm," in which he claimed humans have a natural desire for imagined direct revelation.

Doolittle. Jer. xxiii. 21, 26. I have not sent these Prophets, yet they ran. I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied. ... If any come to Men under Pretence of large Communications from the divine BEING, and pretend to make them Sharers in it, this suddenly takes with them, and like Wild-Fire diffuses itself every where. ... There must then be something in-laid in the present Frame and Constitution of humane Nature, that like Tinder, must be ready to catch every Spark of this Fire. ...

And this I apprehend has generally gone under the Name of ENTHUSIASM. ... It is therefore a powerful Impression or Impulse made upon the Imagination, of having some great and wonderful Communications from God, so as to be made in a very high Degree Partaker of that which is heavenly and divine; and therefore this exalts them in their own Thoughts, as being highly favoured of God, ... and makes them full of Life and Fire. ... And this makes them evermore despise REASON as an evil and dangerous Guide in Matters of Religion, and substitute seeing and feeling in the Room of it, they see such heavenly and divine Things clearly, and feel them strong in their Souls, and therefore despise all Reason and Argument as a mean, dull and beggarly Thing. ... They have a quick and sudden Way of coming at heavenly and divine Things; and this fills them with the highest Extacies of Joy and Comfort. ... God condescends now to reason with [man]. Isa. 1.18. ... But ENTHUSIASM instead of assisting, and strengthening this noble Power, labours to put it wholly out.⁴⁵

As Doolittle said, the desire for direct, specific revelation from God for decision-making is one of 'humane nature' generally.

Waltke. Pagans devised all sorts of special tasks to help them determine the mind of God. ... The most popular was hepatoscopy, the study of the liver. ... One of the greatest kings of Assyria, Ashurbanipal, spent much of his life studying livers in order to divine the will of his god. ... Another method of looking for a sign was that of rhabdomancy, the use of arrows as a sign from the Lord. An example of this occurs in Ezekiel 21:21: "For the king of Babylon will stop at the fork in the road ... to seek an omen. He will cast lots with arrows, he will consult his idols, he will examine the liver." There were various ways to use arrows in determining the will of God. They could be cast, or tossed, to see which way they pointed, ... an ancient equivalent of spinning a lottery wheel. ... There are no examples [in the church] of explicitly seeking or finding God's will after Acts 1:24-26, in which the disciples drew lots to select Matthias as a replacement for Judas.⁴⁶

Robinson. Leo Oppenheimer, in the department of Near Eastern Studies at the University of Chicago, estimates that about ninety percent of the ancient cuneiform writings from Sumer, Assyria, and Babylon have to do with divination - the attempt to understand the mind of the gods when making important choices (Ancient Mesopotamia, University of Chicago, 1964).⁴⁷

Divination is one form of forbidden will-seeking.

Wikipedia. Divination (from Latin *divinare* "to foresee, to be inspired by a god", related to *divinus*, divine) is the attempt to gain insight into a question or situation by way of an occultic, standardized process or ritual. Used in various forms throughout

history, diviners ascertain their interpretations of how a querent should proceed by reading signs, events, or omens, or through alleged contact with a supernatural agency. Divination can be seen as a systematic method with which to organize what appear to be disjointed, random facets of existence such that they provide insight into a problem at hand.⁴⁸

God explicitly forbids using divination to seek revelation about his will for decision making purposes.

Deut. 18:9-15. When you come into the land which the Lord your God gives you, you shall not learn to do after the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you any one that ... uses divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all that do these things are an abomination to the Lord, and because of these abominations the Lord your God drives them out from before you. You shall be perfect with the Lord your God. For these nations, which you will possess, listened to observers of times, and to diviners. But as for you, the Lord your God has not permitted you to do so.

Below is a table of various translations of the forbidden practices of Deuteronomy 18:10-11, several of which have to do with trying to obtain revelation about the future and God's will for the purpose of decision-making.

FORBIDDEN PRACTICES PER DEUT. 18: 10 in Various Bible Translations				
ASV	divination	augury	enchanter	sorcerer

ERV	don't try to learn what will happen in the future	fortune teller	magician	witch or sorcerer
GNV	witchcraft	regarder of times	marker of the flying of fowls	sorcerer
KJV	divination	observer of times	enchanter	witch
NIV	divination	sorcery	interprets omens	witchcraft
OJB	diviner of divination	soothsayer, astrologer	interprets omens	witch
WYC	asks questions of diviners	takes heed to dreams	chittering of birds	witch

FORBIDDEN PRACTICES PER DEUT. 18: 11
in Various Bible Translations

DBY	charmer	inquires of a spirit of Python	sooth-sayer	consults the dead
KJV	charmer	consulter with familiar spirits	wizard	necromancer
MSG	casting spells	holding séances or channeling with the dead		

NIV	casts spells	medium	spiritist	calls up the dead
NLV	uses secret power	helps people talk to spirits	talks to spirits	talks with the dead
NLT	cast spells	mediums	psychics	call forth spirits of the dead
NRS	casts spells	consults ghosts	consults spirits	seek oracles from the dead
WYC	enchanter/ tregetour [magician, trickster]	take counsel of them that have a fiend speaking within them	false diviners	seek of dead men the truth

Acts 17:1-34. Thessalonica to Corinth

Paul, Silas, and Timothy left Luke in Philippi and went on to Thessalonica [CONTIGUOUS TERRITORY]. While they were in Thessalonica, the Philippians sent financial support to them.

Phil. 4:15-16. Now you Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia [Phil/Thess+] [to Achaia including Athens and Corinth], no Congregation shared with me as

concerning giving and receiving, but you only. For even in Thessalonica [the next Macedonian city after Philippi] you sent once and again to my need.

They didn't stay long in Thessalonica before they left there because of persecution [FLEE PERSECUTION] and went on to Berea.

Acts 17:5-10. The Jews which didn't believe, moved with envy, ... set all the city in an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring [Paul and Silas] out to the people. And when they didn't find them, they drew Jason and certain brethren to the rulers of the city, crying, "These that have turned the world upside down are come here also, whom Jason has received." ... And when they had taken [a] security [deposit from these financially poor brethren as a guarantee Paul wouldn't preach there] of Jason, and of the other [brethren], they let them go. And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas [and possibly Timothy also, or he went later] by night to Berea. [Luke had remained back in Philippi.]

When persecution also arose in Berea, Silas and Timothy stayed there to support the brethren [DEFENSE BEFORE OFFENSE], while some Bereans escorted Paul by ship to Athens.

Acts 17:13-15. When the Jews of Thessalonica had knowledge that the word of God was preached of Paul at Berea, they came thither also, and stirred up the people. And then immediately the brethren sent away Paul to go as it were to the sea, but Silas and Timothy abode there still. And they that conducted Paul brought him to Athens, and receiving a

commandment to Silas and Timothy to come to him with all speed, they departed.

After Silas and Timothy came to Paul at Athens, he worried about the Thessalonians, but couldn't go to them without risking the loss of the huge security deposit the rulers had taken from the brethren to ensure Paul stayed away.

1 Ths. 2:14-18. You, brethren, became followers of the Congregations of God which are in Judaea in Messiah Jesus, for you also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews, ... forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles so that they can be saved. ... Wherefore, we would have come to you, even I Paul, once and again [while I was at Athens], but Satan hindered us [by the security deposit taken from the brethren there].

So Paul and Silas sent Timothy back to Thessalonica [DEFENSE BEFORE OFFENSE]. God didn't give Paul any divine revelation that the Thessalonians were doing well, so he needn't worry; nor any divine revelation that they were doing poorly, so they needed Timothy's help.

1 Ths. 3:1-11. When we could no longer forbear [not "when God directed"], we [Paul and Silas] thought it good [not "were led to"] to be left at Athens alone, and sent Timothy, our brother, and minister of God, and our fellow laborer in the gospel of Messiah, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith, that no man should be moved by these afflictions, for yourselves know that we are appointed thereto. For truly, when we were with you, we told you before that we would suffer tribulation, even as it came to pass, as you know. For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent [Timothy] to know

your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labor be in vain.

Timothy visited the Thessalonians, and returned with a good report.

1 Ths. 3:1-11. But now when Timothy came from you to us, and brought us good tidings of your faith and love, and that you have good remembrance of us always, desiring greatly to see us, as we also to see you, therefore, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress by your faith. For now we live, if you stand fast in the Lord. ... Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith.

But Timothy also reported the Thessalonians had some questions, including about the second coming of Messiah, so Paul wrote 1 Thessalonians.

1 Ths. 4:15-17. This we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain to the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. ... The dead in Messiah shall rise first, then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air.

Paul sent both Silas and Timothy back to Thessalonica with 1 Thessalonians, while he went on to Corinth alone. Eventually, Silas and Timothy returned from Thessalonica and met up with him in Corinth.

Acts 18:1, 5. After these things Paul [alone] departed from Athens, and came to Corinth. ... And when Silas and Timothy came [to Corinth] from Macedonia

[Phil/Thess+] Paul was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus was the Messiah.

This is the last mention of Silas in the book of Acts, and the last mention of Timothy until we see him in Ephesus with Paul. I think Luke wants us to assume they both stayed with Paul until he returned to Jerusalem, and then Timothy went on with Paul to Ephesus. But Silas eventually ended up with Peter in Babylon, and delivered Peter's epistle to the same areas Silas had already travelled with Paul.

1 Pet. 1:1; 5:12-13. Peter, ... to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia [Eph+], and Bithynia, ... by Silas, a faithful brother to you. ... The Congregation that is at Babylon ... salutes you, and so does Mark, my son.

Acts 18:11 (Corinth). 16) Teach!

The Word. Mt. 28:18-20. Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, ... "Having gone, ... disciple all nations, baptizing them, ... teaching [διδάσκω, didasko] them."

And Wisdom. Acts 18:11. [Paul] continued [in Corinth] a year and six months, teaching [διδάσκω, didasko] the word of God among them.

Jesus commanded the Congregation, not only to evangelize and make disciples, or 'learners,' but then to teach the learners. Teaching is a job that's never done. Paul continued to teach the people he had earlier evangelized whenever he had the opportunity.

The content the Congregation should teach disciples is found in the epistles and the rest of the Bible, though at

that time it was only available through the Old Testament, the apostles, the New Testament prophets, and the exercise of spiritual gifts in Congregation meetings.

Acts 18:19-19:20. Ephesus



These two partial chapters (18:19-19:20) recount Paul's third missionary journey, to Ephesus, the main city on the west coast of Asia Minor. He also took a mission trip to Crete and Albania following a second visit to Corinth during this time, referred to in the epistles, but not in Acts.

Acts 18:19-19:1. Ephesus to Jerusalem to Ephesus

When Paul left Corinth at the end of his second missionary journey, he dropped Priscilla and Aquila off in Ephesus to prepare for the new ministry there, and he stopped at the synagogue there, before going on to Jerusalem and returning to Ephesus.

Acts 18:18-24. Paul ... sailed from there [Corinth] to Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila, having shaved his head in Cenchrea [Corinth's eastern seaport], for he had a vow [Paul observed Jewish rituals]. And came to Ephesus, and left them there,

but he himself entered into the synagogue, and reasoned with the Jews. When they desired him to tarry a longer time with them, he didn't consent, but bid them farewell, saying, "I must by all means keep this feast that comes [Paul kept the Jewish feasts] in Jerusalem; but I will return again to you, if God will [Paul didn't know the future because he very rarely received any direct revelation for decision making - no 'still, small voice,' etc.]. And he sailed from Ephesus. And when he had landed at Caesarea, and gone up [meaning 'gone up to Jerusalem' since Jerusalem was, is, and always will be, 'up'], and saluted the Congregation, he went down [always 'down' going away from Jerusalem - does your doctrine match this?] to Antioch. And after he had spent some time there, he departed, and went over all the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples [Defense before Offence]. ... And ... having passed through the upper coasts [along the Black Sea], came to Ephesus

Acts 19:8-10. Preaching in the School of Tyrannus

Acts 19:9-10. [Paul] went into the synagogue [in Ephesus], and spoke boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God. But when some were hardened, and believed not, but spoke evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus. And this continued by the space of two years, so that all they which dwelt in Asia [Eph+] heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both

Jews and Greeks [Ἕλλην, Hellyn, Gentiles, not Hellenistic Jews (Ἑλληνιστής, Hellynistys)].

First, as always, Paul preached to Jews, Jewish proselytes, and God-fearing, synagogue-associated Gentiles in the synagogue. Some who had already been saved under the Old Covenant believed in Jesus as soon as they heard the gospel. A higher percentage of synagogue-associated Gentiles had already been saved by faith than of Jews, since it was more likely for Jews to just practice Judaism because their parents were Jewish, whereas the synagogue-associated Gentiles had to go against more of their own culture to join the Jews. All the believers continued to fellowship in the synagogue, since the Jewish brethren and Paul continued to practice Jewish dress and customs to various degrees. Only after the unbelieving Jews began opposing them, did Paul separate the believers out to have their own meetings, and then he evangelized in the school of Tyrannus.

Acts 19:11-20. Miracles and Magic

Paul perfumed amazing and unusual public miracles in Ephesus.

Acts 19:11-12. God worked special miracles by the hands of Paul, so that from his body were brought to the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them.

This cut into the business of itinerant Jewish healers and exorcists. They tried to use Paul's methods.

Acts 19:13-18. Then certain of the itinerant Jews, exorcists, took on them to call over them which had

evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, “We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preaches.”... And the evil spirit answered and said, “Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?” And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, ... so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. And this was known to all the Jews and Greeks also dwelling at Ephesus, and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. And many that believed came, and confessed, and showed their deeds.

But Paul also made enemies thereby. When he will leave Ephesus, in Acts 20, he will remind the Ephesian elders ...

Acts 20:18-19. You know, from the first day that I came to Asia [Eph+], ... I have been ... serving the Lord ... with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews.

Many who used magic were convicted by Paul’s miracles.

Acts 19:19-20. Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men. And they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed.

But this also resulted in much opposition to Paul. So much so that he was imprisoned at this time, though Acts doesn’t record it.

***Acts 19:20. Asian [Eph+]
Imprisonment***

A large part of Paul's ministry occurred at Acts 19:20 that Luke omitted from the book of Acts. Luke didn't include this period in his narrative because 1) he wanted to limit the size of his manuscript, 2) it wasn't essential to the mission of Jesus and Paul in bringing the gospel to the Aegean Gentiles, and 3) most importantly, it included a lot of sufferings and disappointments, and Luke wanted Paul's decision in Acts 20:21 to go up to Jerusalem to suffer, to be the beginning of Paul's passion section in Acts in parallel with Jesus' decision to go up to Jerusalem to suffer. Luke made it simple for us, by leaving only this one big gap in his book, rather than scattering smaller gaps all over his narrative. See my book "Paul's Decision Making in Acts: Anti-Charismatic, Pro-Jewish Commentary on Acts" for more information.

First in Acts 19:20 was Paul's Asian imprisonment.

Occurred at Acts 19:20 when Paul wrote the prison epistle of Philippians.

Acts 19:20. So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed.

Phil. 1:13. My bonds in Messiah are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places.

The main evidence for an Asian [Eph+] imprisonment is that the epistle to the Philippians, a prison epistle, had to have been written from there.

Acts 19:20. Epistle of Philippians

Written at Acts 19:20 from Asia (Eph+).

Acts 19:20. So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed.

Written after Acts 17:15 when Paul left Macedonia [Phil/Thess+] and went to Achaia [Cor+], since Philippians mentions the Philippians sent money to him after he left Macedonia [Phil/Thess+]. After Paul's Macedonian period, was the Corinthian period, when the Philippians also sent money to Paul.

Acts 17:15. They [of Berea in Macedonia] that conducted Paul, brought him to Athens [in Achaia].

Phil. 4:15-16. You Philippians also know, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia [Phil/Thess+], no Congregation shared with me as concerning giving and receiving, but you only.

2 Cor. 11:9. When I was present with you [at Corinth], and was in want, ... that which was lacking to me, the brethren which came from Macedonia [Phil/Thess+] supplied.

Written after Acts 19:1 when Paul began his ministry in Ephesus after leaving Corinth, since "at the last" was sometime after the period after leaving Macedonia (the Corinthian period).

Acts 18:18; 19:1. Paul ... sailed from [Corinth] to Syria. ... And ... [eventually] came to Ephesus.

Phil. 1:7; 4:10. Philippi Sent Money to Paul While He Was in Prison Sometime After Corinth. In my bonds, ... you all are partakers of my grace. ... I rejoiced ... that now at the last [sometime after Corinth] your

care of me has flourished again, wherein you were also careful, but you lacked opportunity.

Written before Acts 19:21, because Paul wrote 1 Corinthians before he had definitely decided to go to Jerusalem, and he wrote Philippians before 1 Corinthians, since he mentioned a promise he made in Philippians in 1 Corinthians.

Phil. 2:24. I trust in the Lord that I ... will come [to you in Philippi] shortly.

1 Cor. 16:3. When I come [for my 2nd visit to Corinth], whomever you'll approve by your letters, them I'll send to bring your liberality to Jerusalem. And if it's appropriate that I go also [Paul hadn't yet decided when he wrote 1 Cor.], they will go with me. Now I'll come to you [for a 2nd visit to Corinth] when I'll pass through Macedonia [Phil/Thess+], for I do [definitely] pass through Macedonia [Phil/Thess+] [since he had promised the Philippians a visit].

Acts 19:21. After these things were ended, Paul purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia [Phil/Thess+] and Achaia [Cor+], to go to Jerusalem, saying, "After I have been there, I must also see Rome."

Written before Acts 20:5 when Luke rejoined Paul because of a vision Paul had that he wouldn't return to any areas he had already evangelized; whereas Paul wrote Philippians when he believed he would return to Philippi.

Phil. 1:25-26; 2:24. I know that I will abide and continue with you, ... that your rejoicing may be more abundant ... by my coming to you again. ... I trust in the Lord that I ... will come shortly.

Acts 20:5. These going before tarried for us at Troas.

Acts 20:25. Now, behold, I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, will see my face no more.

Written before Acts 23:11, when the Lord promised Paul he would live to testify at Rome; whereas when Paul wrote Philippians, he was worried he might die.

Acts 23:11. The Lord stood by him, and said, "Be of good cheer, Paul. For as you have testified of me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness at Rome."

Phil. 1:20; 2:17. Messiah will be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death. ... And if I be offered [die] on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all.

Acts 19:20. Epistle of 1 Corinthians

Written at Acts 19:20 from Ephesus.

Acts 19:20. So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed.

Written after when Paul left Corinth.

Acts 18:18. Paul ... sailed from [Corinth] to Syria.

Written before Acts 19:21, when Paul decided to go to Jerusalem.

Paul Decided to Visit Jerusalem. Acts 19:21. After these things were ended, Paul purposed in the spirit ... to go to Jerusalem.

Paul Hadn't Yet Decided to Visit Jerusalem When He Wrote 1 Corinthians. 1 Cor. 16:3-6. When I come, whomever you will approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality to Jerusalem. And if it be appropriate that I go also, they will go with me. ... It may be that I will abide, yea, and winter with you, that you may bring me on my journey wherever I go.

Before writing 1 Corinthians, Paul had written a non-scripture letter to the Corinthians. Not everything an apostle wrote was scripture.

1 Cor. 5:9. I wrote to you [previously] in a letter not to keep company with fornicators.

The Corinthians wrote back, asking him questions.

1 Cor. 7:1-2. Now concerning the things you wrote to me about ...

While Paul was in prison in Asia [Eph+], some Corinthians came to encourage him, but also reported immorality.

1 Cor. 16:17. I am glad of the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus, for that which was lacking [encouragement-wise, since Paul only accepted financial support from Philippi] on your part they have supplied.

1 Cor. 5:1-5. It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles.

Some brethren had also come from Philippi to support Paul while he was in prison. Paul wrote back to the Philippians while he was still in prison, but he didn't write back to the Corinthians until after he was released.

Phil. 1:13, 30; 4:10. My bonds in Messiah, ... the same conflict which you saw in me [when Paul was imprisoned in Philippi], and now hear to be in me [now that he's imprisoned in Asia, Eph+]. ... I rejoiced ... that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again. ... You have done well, in that you did communicate with my affliction.

We know Paul wrote Philippians before 1 Corinthians, because he refers to a promise he made in Philippians in 1 Corinthians.

Phil. 2:24. I trust in the Lord that I ... will come [to you in Philippi] shortly.

1 Cor. 16:5. Now I'll come to you [for my 2nd visit to Corinth] when I'll pass through Macedonia [Phil/Thess+], for I do [definitely] pass through Macedonia [Phil/Thess+] [since he had promised the Philippians a visit].

Some Corinthians that met in Chloe's house (the Congregation only met in various houses, never in 'church buildings') informed him about divisions.

1 Cor. 1:10-12. It's been declared to me, ... by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you; ... that every one of you says, "I am of Paul," and "I of Apollos," and "I of Cephas," and "I of Messiah."

Paul wrote 1 Corinthians to address their problems and answer their questions. He also told them to store up money each Sunday for the poor believers in Jerusalem, as he had directed the Galatian Congregations.

Paul said he would come to them sometime after Pentecost, which is always in the spring, because he had too many opportunities in Ephesus to leave yet, even though he mentioned he was still at risk from many adversaries. He planned to come and spend some time with the Corinthians, and maybe even winter there, since sea travel was too dangerous during the winter. And then he would either accompany their representatives to Jerusalem with their offering, or he would go somewhere else. He didn't know, because he wasn't led by divine revelation in any form for most of his decisions.

1 Cor. 16:1-9. Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the Congregations of Galatia, even so do you. On the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, ... that there be no gatherings when I come [for my 2nd visit]. And when I come, whomever you will approve by your letters, them I will send to bring your liberality to Jerusalem. And if it be appropriate [not 'if the Lord leads'] that I go also, they will go with me. Now I will come to you [for my 2nd visit] when I pass through Macedonia [Phil/Thess+], ... and it may be [he couldn't know for sure since he didn't make his decisions via direct revelation] that I will ... winter with you, that you may bring me on my journey wherever I go. ... I trust [not, 'God led me'] to tarry a while with you, if the Lord permit [not 'if the Lord leads']. But I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost, for a great and effective door is opened to me, and there are many adversaries.

Paul said he will stay at Ephesus until Pentecost because he had an open door there, meaning a lot of opportunities. But if he had a lot of opportunities, why leave at Pentecost? Because Paul had even more important goals to reach, and

he didn't take open doors (i.e. opportunities) to be guidance for decision-making.

At this time, Paul didn't yet know if he would winter with the Corinthians or not, or whether he would accompany the offering to Jerusalem or not, because God didn't usually guide him by direct revelation. And he wouldn't eventually make his decision by "praying about it" to see "if the Lord leads," but only "if it be appropriate" (1 Cor. 16:4) and "if the Lord permit" (1 Cor. 16:7).

Waltke. Make your decision according to your circumstances [not as if they're guidance but to make wise use of your options]. ... As Paul wrote to the believers in Corinth, he told them that he wanted to visit them, but he added, "After I go through Macedonia [Phil/Thess+], I will come to you - for I will be going through Macedonia [Phil/Thess+]. Perhaps I will stay with you awhile, or even spend the winter, so that you can help me on my journey wherever I go. I do not want to see you now and make only a passing visit: I hope to spend some time with you, if the Lord permits. But I will stay on at Ephesus until Pentecost, because a great door for effective work has opened to me" (1 Corinthians 6:5-9). Notice how Paul was flexible. ... He had the ability to change his schedule according to the circumstances.⁴⁹

This collection for the poor believers at Jerusalem was a very important project to Paul, because he hoped it would further unify Jews and Gentiles in the Congregation. Paul had sent Timothy and some other brethren to Philippi while he was in prison.

Phil. 2:19. I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy shortly to you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state.

Paul had told Timothy and the brethren to go on to Corinth before returning to report how the Philippians were doing.

1 Cor. 4:17. I sent to you Timothy [after Philippi per Phil. 2:19], ... who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which are in Messiah, as I teach every where in every Congregation.

1 Cor. 16:10-11. Now if Timothy comes [after Philippi per Phil. 2:19], see that he may be with you without fear, for he works the work of the Lord, as I also do. Let no man therefore despise him, but conduct him forth in peace, that he may come to me, for I look for him with the brethren.

Timothy's weakness (2 Tim. 1:7-8), like Mark's (Mk. 14:51-52; Acts 13:13) was fear. So Paul said, "See that he may be with you without fear." Several years later, when Paul was imprisoned at Rome, Timothy came to him there, despite his fearfulness, even though it was very dangerous, and he was imprisoned himself, but eventually released (2 Tim. 4:6, 9; Heb. 13:23).

Apollos had returned to Ephesus from Corinth. Paul had wanted him to go with Timothy and the brethren, but Apollos always worked independently, and never submitted to Paul's apostolic authority.

1 Cor. 16:12. As touching our brother Apollos, I greatly desired him to come to you with the brethren, but his will was not at all to come at this time; but he will come when he will have convenient time.

Even the first time Apollo went to Corinth, he only went because “he was disposed” (Acts 18:27) to do so, not in coordination with the brethren, though they provided him with letters of recommendation. Apollos probably had quite an ego, thus his eloquence. But Paul was always willing to work with him, and support his ministry, because his doctrine was good.

Acts 18:24. Apollos, ... an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures.

Acts 19:20. Second Visit to Corinth

Occurred at Acts 19:20.

Acts 19:20. So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed.

Occurred after Acts 18:18 when Paul left Corinth the first time.

Acts 18:18. Paul ... sailed from [Corinth] to Syria.

Occurred at Acts 19:20, after Paul wrote Philippians and 1 Corinthians.

Phil. 2:19, 24. I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy shortly to you. ... I trust in the Lord that I ... will come [to you in Philippi] shortly.

1 Cor. 16:5, 10-11. Now I'll come to you [for my 2nd visit to Corinth] when I'll pass through Macedonia [Phil/Thess+], for I do [definitely] pass through Macedonia [Phil/Thess+] [since he had promised the Philippians a visit]. ... Now if Timothy come, see that he may be with you without fear, ... but conduct him

forth in peace, that he may come to me; for I look for him with the brethren.

Occurred before Acts 20:1 when Paul left Ephesus and then wrote 2 Corinthians.

Acts 20:1. Paul ... departed [from Ephesus] to go into Macedonia.

2 Cor. 7:5-6. When we came into Macedonia, ... God ... comforted us by the coming of Titus [from Corinth].

Occurred before Acts 20:3 when Paul wrote Romans during his third visit to Corinth.

Acts 20:2-3. And when he had gone over those parts, ... he came into Greece [e.g. Achaia/Corinth] , and stayed there three months.

Rom. 15:19. From Jerusalem and round about to Albania, I have [already] fully preached the gospel of Messiah [during his 2nd visit to Corinth].

Paul's second visit to Corinth included a mission trip to Crete and Albania. Luke didn't include Paul's second visit to Corinth in Acts, because he didn't want to begin focusing on Paul's disappointments until after Paul's decision to go up to Jerusalem. He also knew the trip was already covered in Paul's epistles. And the trip didn't really further Jesus' mission through Paul. Crete was the largest island of the Aegean, so Paul had to visit there, but it already had significant numbers of believers. And Albania wasn't really part of the main mission to the Gentiles of the Aegean.

This journey is also when Titus, the Gentile whose freedom from circumcision Paul had defended years before in

Jerusalem, became a prominent coworker with Paul. Titus is mentioned twelve times in the New Testament; in Galatians, 2 Corinthians, 2 Timothy, and Titus; but never in Acts. It's probably not because he was a close relative of Luke. Luke was Jewish, and Titus was Jewish on his mom's side. But rather because nothing Titus was involved in, like his work in Corinth, Crete, and Albania, furthered Paul's essential mission.

Titus' not being forced to be circumcised during Paul's Acts 11:30 visit to Jerusalem was too early in Luke's book to bring up the issue of Gentiles and the Law, which Luke dealt with in Acts 15. Finally, Luke may have been somewhat disappointed with Titus. Although Paul had praised him for having been self-motivated in going to Corinth, the same characteristic may have caused him to return to Albania under his own initiative, when he hadn't been sent by Paul, thus leaving Luke alone in Rome with Paul during the difficult days of his trial and execution.

2 Cor. 8:16-17. Thanks be to God, which put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you. For indeed he accepted the exhortation, but being more forward, of his own accord he went to you.

2 Tim. 4:10-11. Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed [not 'was sent'] to Thessalonica; Crescens [is departed] to Galatia; Titus [is departed] to Albania. Only Luke is with me.

The reason we know there was a second visit to Corinth, unrecorded by Luke, is that 2 Corinthians says Paul was on his way to Corinth for a "third time" (2 Cor. 13:1), but Acts only records two visits (Acts 18:18, 20:2). Basil calls the trip, "Paul's flying visit to Corinth,"⁵⁰ because he doesn't

see much time available for it during Paul's ministry in Ephesus, for some reason he doesn't expound upon.

I added Crete to the trip, because it's so close to Corinth, and Paul's visit there (Titus 1:5), also isn't recorded in Acts. I added Albania, because Paul said he evangelized Albania before he wrote Romans during his third visit to Corinth (Rom. 15:19). By adding these two places to the itinerary of Paul's second visit to Corinth, there's no longer any need to assume a release and second Roman imprisonment for Paul, which isn't recorded in Acts.

First Visit to Corinth. Acts 18:1. Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth.

Implied Second Visit to Corinth. 2 Cor. 13:1. This is the third time I'm coming to you.

Visit to Crete. Titus 1:5. For this cause I left you in Crete.

Visit to Albania. Titus 3:12. Come to me to Nicopolis [near Albania].

Paul's Mission to Albania Was Before His Third Visit to Corinth. Rom. 15:19. From Jerusalem, and round about to Albania, I have [already] fully preached the gospel of Messiah.

Third Visit to Corinth. Acts 20:2-3. When he had gone over Macedonia [Phil/Thess+], ... he came to Achaia [Cor+], and stayed there three months.



Mission: 2nd Visit to Corinth

When Timothy returned to Ephesus from Corinth (1 Cor. 16:11), Paul asked him to stay and watch over things, while he went to Corinth to collect their offering, and possibly accompany it to Jerusalem.

1 Tim. 1:1-3. Paul, ... to Timothy. ... I besought you to remain at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia [Phil/Thess+], so that you would charge some that they teach no other doctrine.

Paul brought Titus, Artemis, and Tychicus with him. He later called his second visit to Corinth “a painful visit” (2 Cor. 2:1, NIV). Paul didn’t collect the Corinthians’ offering as he had planned, or go to Jerusalem, or stay in Corinth long. Instead of wintering with them, he used the time to evangelize some skipped areas. He probably already had Crete and Albania in mind when he wrote ...

1 Cor. 16:3-7. Them I will send to bring your liberality to Jerusalem, and if it be appropriate that I go also, they will go with me. ... And it may be that I will stay, yes, and winter with you, that you may bring me on my journey wherever I go, ... but I trust to

tarry a while with you [on my 2nd visit to you], if the Lord permit.

After leaving Corinth, Paul went to Crete, only a nine-hour ferry trip from Athens today, but a longer voyage of course then. There were already believers in Crete (Acts 2:11). So Paul left Crete to go to Albania because he only put his efforts into unevangelized areas [NEW TERRITORY]. But he left Titus there to organize the Congregations.

Titus 1:5. For this cause I left you in Crete, so that you would set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed you.

Then Paul, Artemis, and Tychicus went to the northwest coast of Greece, and evangelized as far as modern Albania.

Rom. 15:18-19. From Jerusalem, and round about to [Albania], I have fully preached the gospel of Messiah.

Titus 3:12. When I shall send Artemas to you, or Tychicus, be diligent to come to me to Nicopolis.

Meanwhile, Apollos finally found it convenient to go to Corinth.

1 Cor. 16:12. Apollos ... will come when he will have convenient time.

But seeing the contentions there, and hearing that Paul had gone on to Crete, he also went on to Crete.

Titus 3:13. Bring Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their journey diligently.

Acts 19:20. Epistle of 1 Timothy

Written at Acts 19:20 from Albania.

Acts 19:20. So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed.

Written at Acts 19:20 after Paul wrote Philippians and 1 Corinthians, and then went to Philippi and Corinth for his second visit to Corinth.

Phil. 1:25-26; 2:24. I know that ... your rejoicing [will] be more abundant ... by my coming to you again [2nd visit to Philippi]. ... I trust in the Lord that I ... will come shortly.

1 Cor. 16:5-6. Now I will come to you [for a 2nd visit to Corinth], when I will pass through Macedonia [Phil/Thess+], for I will pass through Macedonia [Phil/Thess+]. ... And it may be that I will remain, yes, and winter with you, that you may bring me on my journey wherever I go.

1 Tim. 1:3. I asked you to remain still at Ephesus, when I went to Macedonia [Phil/Thess+] [for his 2nd visit to Corinth], so that you would charge some that they teach no other doctrine.

Written at Acts 19:20 after Paul was not well received in Corinth at his second visit, and so didn't accompany their offering to Jerusalem at that time, or stay or winter there, but instead used the time to evangelize some skipped areas.

2 Cor. 2:1 NIV. I made up my mind that I would not make another painful visit to you [like the 2nd one].

Titus 3:13. Come to me to Nicopolis [near Albania], for I have determined to winter there.

Written at Acts 19:20 after Paul went to Albania, because when he was in Corinth and Crete, he didn't hope to return to Ephesus soon, but after he spent some time in Albania, he could say he hoped to return to Ephesus soon.

1 Tim. 3:14. These things I write to you, hoping to come to you shortly.

Written at Acts 19:20 after Paul found Nicopolis to be a good place to spend the winter, and probably sent at the same time as his letter to Titus.

Titus 3:12-13. When I shall send ... [for you], be diligent to come to me to Nicopolis, for I have determined [not 'God told me' or 'led me'] to winter there.

Written at Acts 19:20 before Paul finished wintering in Albania, because after he finished wintering in Albania he knew he would return to Ephesus soon, whereas when he wrote 1 Timothy, he only hoped to return soon.

1 Tim. 3:14. These things I write to you, hoping [not 'knowing' because God didn't usually guide him by direct revelation] to come to you shortly.

Written before Acts 20:3, when Paul made his third visit to Corinth, when he wrote Romans, and told them he had already evangelized as far as Albania.

2 Cor. 13:1. This is the third time I'm coming to you.

Rom. 15:19. From Jerusalem, and round about to [Albania] [during his 2nd visit], I have [already] fully

preached the gospel of Messiah.

On his third visit to Corinth, Paul didn't leave Timothy in Ephesus, like he did on his second visit.

Acts 19:21-22. After these things were ended, Paul purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia [Phil/Thess+] and Achaia [Cor+], to go to Jerusalem. ... So he sent into Macedonia [Phil/Thess+] two of them that ministered to him, Timothy and Erastus, but he himself stayed in Asia [Eph+] for a season.

Acts 20:4. There accompanied him [back] into Asia [Eph+], ... Timothy.

Paul wrote the epistle of 1 Timothy to instruct Timothy (and we who come after) in his Congregational ministry in Ephesus.

1 Tim. 3:14-16; 4:13. These things I write to you ... so that you can know how you ought to behave yourself in in the house of God, which is the Congregation of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached to the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory. ... Until I come, give attendance to [public scripture] reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.

Acts 19:20. Epistle of Titus

Written at Acts 19:20 from Albania.

Acts 19:20. So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed.

Written at Acts 19:20 after Paul had a bad second visit with the Corinthians, and went on to Crete, instead of going to Jerusalem with their offering or staying with them through the winter. (See previous sections.)

Written at Acts 19:20 after Paul left Titus in Crete and went on to evangelize the west coast of Greece as far as Albania, and had found that Nicopolis would be a good place to winter.

Titus 3:12. Come to me to Nicopolis, for I have determined [not 'God told me' or 'led me'] to winter there.

Written at Acts 19:20 after Apollos had found "convenient time" (1 Cor. 16:12) to go to Corinth, where he heard Paul had gone to Crete, and followed him there.

Titus 3:13. Send [or accompany] Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their journey diligently, that nothing be lacking to them.

Written at Acts 19:20 before Paul finished wintering in Nicopolis. Probably written at the same time 1 Timothy and the severe letter to Corinth. (See the section on 1 Timothy.)

Written before Acts 20:3, when Paul made his third visit to Corinth, and wrote Romans, saying he had finished evangelizing as far as Albania.

Rom. 15:19, 25. From Jerusalem, and round about to Albania, I have fully preached the gospel of Messiah. ... But now I go to Jerusalem to minister to the saints.

When Paul left Titus in Crete, he told him he would send a letter back to let him know where to meet him, once he had seen Albania, and knew where he would winter.

Apollos had never shown himself willing to submit to Paul's apostolic authority, so he may have been planning to go to his hometown of Alexandria in Egypt. In any case, with Titus 3:13 (quoted above), Apollos journeyed out of the New Testament.

Acts 18:24. A certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures. [If a Jew can have a Gentile name with the the pagan god 'Apollo' in it, there's no reason a man with the name 'Luke' can't be a Jew rather than a Gentile also.]

Paul always seemed to go to extremes to be gracious towards Apollos. He didn't seem to hold Apollos responsible for the divisions in Corinth, even though he was the hero of one group.

1 Cor. 1:11-13. It has been declared to me ... that there are contentions among you, ... that every one of you says, "I'm of Paul;" and "I of Apollos;" and "I of [Peter];" and "I of Messiah." Is Messiah divided?

And Paul always seemed willing to work with Apollos. Whereas Paul had rebuked Peter publicly because of doctrinal error, Apollos' problem seemed only to lie in being difficult to work with, which is to be expected since Apollos' valuing of eloquence was also likely accompanied by a high opinion of himself, even though he did let Priscilla and Aquila correct his doctrine. Paul provides a role model for all in working with others, even those who are difficult to work with, so long as their doctrine is wholesome.

During the times of the apostles, their authority and accompanying power in the Spirit maintained unity among the Congregation leaders, and the problems were with the people (Acts 15:24; 21:18-22; 1 Cor. 1:11-12; 1 Cor. 16:12; Titus 3:13). But towards the end of the apostolic times, the problems began to originate with corrupt leaders (Acts 20:29-31; 1 Tim. 1:3, 19-20; 2 Jn. 1:10; 3 Jn. 1:9-12; Rev. 2:2).

Titus eventually met Paul in Nicopolis. Paul wrote a (non-scripture) severe letter, and sent it to Corinth with Titus and Artemas, while he and Tychicus returned to Ephesus. Tychicus stayed in Ephesus until he met Paul in Troas for the trip to Jerusalem (Acts 20:3-5); while Titus and Artemas met Paul in Macedonia while Paul was heading towards Corinth for his 3rd visit there.

2 Cor. 2:1. I made you sorry with a letter.

2 Cor. 12:18. I desired Titus, and with him I sent a brother [Artemas].

Acts 20:1. Paul ... departed [from Ephesus] to go into Macedonia.

2 Cor. 7:5-6. When we came into Macedonia, ... God ... comforted us by the coming of Titus [and probably Artemas, from Corinth].

Acts 20:4. Tychicus, ... going before tarried for us at Troas.

Acts 19:21-21:17. Going Up to Jerusalem

Acts 19:21. Paul's Decision to Go Up to Jerusalem

Acts 19:20 was the high point in Paul's ministry and the completion of Jesus' ministry to bring the gospel to the islands of the Gentiles, the Aegean.

Acts 19:10-12; 19-20. All they which dwelt in Asia [Eph+] heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks. And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul, so that from his body were brought to the sick handkerchiefs or [tentmaking work] aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them. ... Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men. And they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed.

From this point on, things would go downhill; outwardly, of course, because even in suffering, God will accomplish his purposes. Paul believed his ministry in the Aegean was finished. Not that the Congregations there no longer had significant problems, but that they had mature kinds of problems. Jesus had finished laying a strong foundation for the Congregation in the Aegean through Paul.

Eph. 2:19-20. You ... are built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets.

1 Cor. 3:9-10. You are God's building. According to the grace of God which is given to me, as a wise master builder, I [Paul] have laid the foundation.

Opposition was rising against Paul, both inside and outside the Congregations. Some were claiming he wasn't really an apostle. His relations had been strained with the Congregation in Corinth, and he had recently sent them a severe letter. And it was becoming dangerous for him to remain in Ephesus.

2 Cor. 1:5, 8-10. The sufferings of Messiah abound in us. ... For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia [Eph+], that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life. But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raises the dead, who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver; in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us.

What about Paul's principle of 'DEFENSE BEFORE OFFENCE?' By this time, there were many laborers in the areas he had evangelized who were mature enough to carry on the work independently from him. His work would survive and continue to spread from there to other places in the world, even though false teachers would enter into some Congregations.

Acts 20:29-30. I know ... that after my departing grievous wolves will enter in among you [in Ephesus], not sparing the flock. Also, of yourselves will men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.

And now the Congregation Paul established among the Gentiles of the Aegean was sure to survive even if some individual Congregations might not survive.

Rev. 1:20; 2:5. The seven candlesticks ... are the seven Congregations. ... I will come ... and will remove your candlestick [in Ephesus] out of its place, unless you repent.

So, according to Paul's principles of 'NEW TERRITORY' and 'CONTIGUOUS TERRITORY,' Paul decided it was time for him to evangelize Spain, the next unevangelized, contiguous region west of Corinth, since Rome already had Congregations there. After accompanying the offering to Jerusalem, he planned to go to Rome, and establish a base there, to support his mission to Spain, like the Congregation at Antioch Syria, supported his missions to Galatia and the Aegean.

Rom. 15:20-25. I strived to preach the gospel, where Messiah was not named, ... for which cause also I have been much hindered from coming to you [because Rome had a lower priority since it was already evangelized]. But now having no more place in these parts [the work was mature, and so it was also unnecessary for him to stay there and face the growing personal opposition], and having a great desire these many years to come to you, whenever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you. For I trust to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way there by you. ... But now I go to Jerusalem to minister to the saints.

Acts 19:21-20:1. The Collection for the Saints

Before going to Spain, Paul wanted to bring an offering from the predominantly Gentile Congregations of the Aegean, to the poor of the predominantly Jewish Congregation at Jerusalem, to foster unity between the two equal branches of the Congregation. He said all predominantly Gentile Congregations owe a debt to the predominantly Jewish Congregations.

Rom. 15:26-27. It has pleased them of Macedonia [Phil/Thess+] and Achaia [Cor+] [they volunteered, while Paul had asked Galatia and Ephesus], to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem. It has pleased them truly, and they are their debtors. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of [the Jews] spiritual things, it's also their [the Gentiles] duty to minister to them [the Jewish brethren] in physical things.

Does your Congregation recognize its God-stated obligation to support Jewish ministries, or do errors in your Congregation's doctrine, like from Reformed Theology, prevent it from acknowledging the continuing distinctions between Jews and Gentiles, both within and outside the Congregation?

When Paul had visited Corinth the second time, to collect their offering, though it didn't work out at that time, he had planned for Corinth's representatives to meet up with Galatia's representatives, like in Ephesus or Antioch Syria, on their way to Jerusalem.

1 Cor. 16:1. Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the Congregations of Galatia, even so do you [in Corinth].

But after the year delay since Paul's second visit to Corinth, the Galatian Congregations had finished their collection, and had sent representatives to Paul in Ephesus, before he went to Corinth for the third time.

2 Cor. 9:2. [Corinth] was ready [to give] a year ago [when Paul made his 2nd visit]. Acts 20:4. There accompanied Paul to Asia [Eph+], ... Gaius of Derbe [in Galatia].

Paul had also gotten Asia [Eph+] to participate.

Acts 20:4. And of Asia [Eph+], Tychicus and Trophimus.

Also, by this time the Congregations of Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea had heard about the plan, and pleaded to be allowed to participate, despite their own poverty.

2 Cor. 8:1-4. The Congregations of Macedonia [Phil/Thess+], ... [despite] their deep poverty, pray[ed] us with much entreaty that we would receive the gift, and take on us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.

Rom. 15:26-27. It has pleased them of Macedonia [Phil/Thess+] and Achaia [Cor+], to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem.

When Paul had written 1 Corinthians, he didn't know if it would be appropriate for him to accompany the offering to Jerusalem or not.

1 Cor. 16:3-4. When I come [for my 2nd visit], whomever you shall approve by your letters, them I

will send to bring your liberality to Jerusalem. And if it be appropriate [not “if God leads”] that I go also, they will go with me.

Now, almost a year after the second visit to Corinth, knowing it was time to move on, Paul was certain he wanted to accompany the offering to Jerusalem.

Acts 19:21. After these things were ended, Paul purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia [Phil/Thess+] and Achaia [Cor+], to go to Jerusalem, saying, “After I have been there, I must also see Rome.”

Paul’s original preference was to 1) sail directly from Ephesus to Corinth, to make sure the Corinthians had accepted his corrections, and were going to follow through with the collection this time, 2) go on to Macedonia [Phil/Thess+] to pick up their collection and representatives, 3) go back to Corinth to pick up their collection and representatives, and 4) sail to Jerusalem from there.

Plan 1). Ephesus > Corinth > Macedonia [Phil/Thess+] > Corinth > Jerusalem

2 Cor. 1:15-16. I was minded [‘thought in my mind,’ not ‘was led’] to come to you first, so that you could have a second benefit, and to pass by you to Macedonia [Phil/Thess+], and to come again out of Macedonia [Phil/Thess+] to you, and of you to be brought on my way toward Judaea.

But he decided to put Corinth off until last, because he didn’t look forward to possibly having to rebuke them when he next saw them.

Plan 2). Ephesus > Macedonia [Phil/Thess+] > Corinth > Jerusalem > Rome > Spain

2 Cor. 1:23. I call God for a record on my soul, that to spare you, I came not as yet to Corinth.

Acts 19:21. After these things were ended, Paul purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia [Phil/Thess+] and Achaia [Cor+], to go to Jerusalem, saying, "After I have been there, I must also see Rome."

Rom. 15:25, 28. Now I go to Jerusalem to minister to the saints. ... When therefore I have performed this, ... I will come by you [Romans] to Spain.

In the meantime, Paul sent Timothy and Erastus ahead to prepare the Congregations for the collection.

Acts 19:22. So he sent to Macedonia [Phil/Thess+] two of them that ministered to him, Timothy and Erastus; but he himself stayed in Asia [Eph+] for a season.

Waltke. Acts 19:21-22. 2 Cor. 1:15-18, 23-24; 2:1 Make Your Decision according to an Overall Strategy. ... Paul had a definite vision for his life, according to his heart's desire. ... "I planned to visit you first so that you might benefit twice. I planned to visit you on my way to Macedonia [Phil/Thess+] and to come back to you from Macedonia [Phil/Thess+], and then have you send me on my way to Judea. ... [But] it was in order to spare you that I did not return to Corinth. ... So I made up my mind that I would not make another painful visit to you. (2 Corinthians 1:15-18, 23-24; 2:1) Paul knew what he wanted to do and

where he wanted to go. He had an overall strategy that he was working from.⁵¹

Don't confuse Paul's plans for a second visit to Corinth, talked about in 1 Corinthians 16; with his plans for a third visit, talked about in 2 Corinthians 8-9.

PAUL'S 2ND AND 3RD VISITS TO CORINTH (1)	
Second Visit	Third Visit
<u>Soon after Pentecost.</u> 1 Cor. 16:8. I will remain at Ephesus until Pentecost.	<u>About 4 months before Passover a Year Later.</u> Acts 20:2-3, 6, 16. He ... remained [at Corinth] three months. ... We sailed away from Philippi after [Passover]. ... He hurried ... to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost.
<u>Planned to stay a long time and maybe winter there.</u> Acts 16:6. It may be that I will abide, ... and winter with you. ... I trust to tarry a while with you.	<u>Planned to stay until about a month before Passover.</u> Acts 20:3. The Jews laid wait for him, as he was about to sail into Syria [on a Passover pilgrimage vessel].
<u>Didn't know if he would go to</u>	<u>Knew he would go to Jerusalem</u>

<p><u>Jerusalem, or from there.</u> Acts 19:21. Paul purposed ... to go to Jerusalem. 2 Cor. 1:15-16. I was minded to come to you ... and of you that I go also, they will go with me. ... [Otherwise], you may bring me on my journey wherever I go.</p>	<p><u>someplace else, from there.</u> 1 Cor. 16:4-6. Them I will send to ... Jerusalem, and if it's appropriate you ... and of you to be brought on my way toward Judaea.</p>
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<p><u>Planned to go through Philippi to Corinth.</u> 1 Cor. 16:5. I will come to you, when I will pass through Macedonia [Phil/Thess+], for I do pass through Macedonia [Phil/Thess+].</p>	<p><u>Planned to go to Corinth first, but then changed his plans to go to Philippi first.</u> 2 Cor. 1:15-16. I was minded to come to you [Corinth] first, so that you could have a second benefit, and to pass by you to Macedonia [Phil/Thess+], and to come again out of Macedonia [Phil/Thess+] to you. 2 Cor. 1:23. To spare you I came not as yet to Corinth. Acts 20:1-2. Paul ... departed to go to Macedonia, and when he had gone over those</p>
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	parts, ... he came to [Corinth].
	<u>A year later than the second visit.</u> 2 Cor. 8:10. You ... came up with the idea, a year ago.

PAUL'S 2ND AND 3RD VISITS TO CORINTH (2)	
Second Visit	Third Visit
<u>Sent Timothy and brethren ahead to Philippi and Corinth to return to him in Ephesus.</u> Phil. 2:19. I trust ... to send Timothy shortly to you, that I ... may ... know your state. 1 Cor. 16:10-11. If Timothy come, ... conduct him ... in peace, that he may come to me, for I look for him with the brethren.	<u>Sent Timothy ahead to wait for him in Corinth.</u> 2 Cor. 8:16-19, 22. Titus ... went to you ... with ... the brother [Timothy], whose praise is ... throughout all the Congregations, and ... who was also chosen of the Congregations to travel with us. ... We have sent with them our brother [Erastus], ... we have oftentimes proved diligent, ... but now much more ... [to] you.
<u>Left Timothy in Ephesus to watch over</u>	<u>Sent Timothy ahead.</u> Acts 19:22. He sent to

<p><u>things.</u> 1 Tim. 1:3. I asked you to remain ... at Ephesus when I went into Macedonia [Phil/Thess+].</p>	<p>Macedonia [Phil/Thess+] ... Timothy and Erastus, but he himself stayed in Asia [Eph+] for a season.</p>
<p><u>Came with Titus, Artemas, and Tychicus.</u> Titus 3:12. When I shall send Artemas to you, or Tychicus, be diligent to come to me to Nicopolis, for I have determined to winter there.</p>	<p><u>Came with representatives from Macedonia.</u> 2 Cor. 9:4. Lest haply if they of Macedonia come with me, and find you unprepared, we (that we say not, you) should be ashamed.</p>
<p><u>Only Corinth and Galatia planned to participate.</u> 1 Cor. 15:3. When I come, whomever you will approve by your letters, them I will send. 1 Cor. 16:1. Concerning the collection ..., as I have given order to the</p>	<p><u>Macedonia [Phil/Thess+] and Asia [Eph+] also participated.</u> 2 Cor. 8:1-4. The Congregations of Macedonia ... praying us ... that we would receive the gift. Rom. 15:26. It has pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain</p>

churches of Galatia, ... so do you.	contribution. ... Acts 20:4. There accompanied him, ... of Berea; and of the Thess., ... of Derbe, ... and of Asia.
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While Paul remained behind in Ephesus, after sending Timothy out ahead of his third visit to Corinth, there was a riot, because the success of Paul's preaching had reduced the sales of idols.

Acts 19:23-41. The same time [that Timothy and Erastus were away] there arose no small stir about that 'way' [meaning 'Messianism']. For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, which made silver shrines for Diana, ... called together ... the workmen of like occupation, and said, "Sirs, you know ... that not only at Ephesus, but almost throughout all [this region], this Paul has persuaded ... much people, saying that they are no gods, which are made with hands; so that not only this our craft is in danger, ... but also that the temple [one of the seven wonders of the ancient world] of the great goddess Diana should be despised. ... And the whole city was filled with confusion. And having caught Gaius and Aristarchus, men of Macedonia [Phil/Thess+] Paul's companions in travel, they rushed with one accord into the amphitheater. ... And they drew [a Jewish man named] Alexander out of the multitude, the Jews putting him forward [probably to differentiate themselves from Paul]. ... But when they knew that he was a Jew [and therefore also against idolatry], all with one voice about the space of two hours cried out, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" And when the

town clerk had appeased the people, he said, “You men of Ephesus, what man is there that doesn’t know how that the city of the Ephesians is a worshipper of the great goddess Diana, and of the image which fell down from Jupiter? ... You ought to be quiet, and to do nothing rashly. ... If Demetrius, and the craftsmen which are with him, have a matter against any man, the law is open, ... let them implead one another. ... For we are in danger to be called in question for this day’s uproar.” ... And when he had thus spoken, he dismissed the assembly.

After the riot, Paul immediately left Ephesus with Gaius and Aristarchus, who had been dragged into the amphitheater by the mob.

Acts 20:1. And after the uproar was ceased, Paul called to him the disciples, and embraced them, and departed to go to Macedonia [Phil/Thess+].

Tychicus and Trophimus waited in Ephesus for Paul to pick them and the Ephesian offering up by ship on his way from Corinth to Jerusalem.

Acts 20:4b-5. Of Asia [Eph+], Tychicus and Trophimus; these going before [to Troas from Ephesus] waited for us at Troas.

It wasn’t only pagan Gentile opposition that was increasing against Paul, but also unbelieving Jewish opposition.

Acts 20:18-19. You [Ephesians] know, from the first day that I came to Asia [Eph+], after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews.

Not only did the Jews lie in wait to ambush him in Ephesus, but also in Corinth. Paul had planned to sail on a pilgrim ship from Corinth, to Ephesus, and then to a port near Jerusalem, so he could be there for Passover, but he had to change his plans.

Corinth. Acts 20:3. And when the Jews laid wait for him, as he was about to sail to Syria, he decided to return through Macedonia [Phil/Thess+].

And Luke lists two more such plots over the next two years. One at the beginning of his Caesarean imprisonment ...

Jerusalem. Acts 23:12-13. Certain of the Jews banded together, and bound themselves under a curse, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul. And they were more than forty which had made this conspiracy. Indicate to the chief captain that he bring him down to you tomorrow, ... and we, before he ever comes near, are ready to kill him.

And once at the end of his Caesarean imprisonment ...

Caesarea Two Years Later. Acts 25:2-3. Then the high priest and the chief of the Jews informed [Governor Festus] against Paul, and asked him, ... that he would send for him to Jerusalem, [their men] laying wait in the way to kill him.

To get to Philippi, Paul had to go through the seaport of Troas. So the first thing he did, was to leave some of his things in Troas with a man named Carpus. Paul figured he could send for the stuff from Rome after he delivered the offering to Jerusalem.

2 Tim. 4:13. The coat that I left at Troas with Carpus,
... and the books, ... [and] the parchments.

Passing through Troas, Paul found an open door to evangelize. But Titus hadn't returned yet from taking Paul's severe letter from Albania to Corinth when Paul returned from Albania to Ephesus. So since Paul was worried about Titus, he walked away from the open door at Troas, and went on to Philippi hoping to find Titus. Every time the New Testament mentions an open door for Paul, he walked away from it. Open doors indicate opportunities, not divine guidance.

2 Cor. 2:12-13. When I came to Troas to preach Messiah's gospel, and a door was opened to me of the Lord, [but] I had no rest in my spirit, because I found not Titus my brother; [so] taking my leave of them [in Troas], I went from there [to Philippi].

Acts 20:2a. Epistle of 2 Corinthians

Written at Acts 20:2a from Macedonia [Phil/Thess+].

Acts 20:2a. Paul ... departed to go into Macedonia.

Written after Acts 20:1 when Paul left Ephesus, and met Titus in Macedonia [Phil/Thess+] coming from Corinth.

Acts 20:1. And when he had gone over those parts, and had given them much exhortation, ...

2 Cor. 2:12-13; 7:6. When I came to Troas, ... I had no rest in my spirit, because I found not Titus my brother, but taking my leave of them, I went from there to Macedonia [Phil/Thess+]. ... Nevertheless, God, ... comforted us by the coming of Titus.

Written before Acts 20:3, when Paul visited Corinth a third time.

Acts 20:3. He came into Greece [Achaia/Corinth], and stayed there three months.

2 Cor. 9:3-4. I sent the brethren, ... so that ... you may be ready, lest by chance if they of Macedonia [Phil/Thess+] come with me, and find you unprepared, we, that we say not you, should be ashamed.

2 Cor. 13:1-5. This is the third time I'm coming to you. ... I ... tell you in advance, as if I were present the second time, ... that [when] I come again, I will not spare.

When Paul went into Macedonia [Phil/Thess+] from Ephesus, his opposition and troubles continued, but a good thing that happened to him was that Titus arrived from Corinth with the news the Corinthians had received Paul's severe letter well, and had disciplined those who had transgressed.

2 Cor. 7:4-16. I am filled with comfort, I am exceedingly joyful in all our tribulation. For, when we had come into Macedonia [Phil/Thess+], our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears. Nevertheless, God, that comforts those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus; and not by his coming only, but by the consolation with which he was comforted in you, when he told us your earnest desire, your mourning, your fervent mind toward me; so that I rejoiced the more. For though I made you sorry with a letter, ... what carefulness it

worked in you, yes, what clearing of yourselves, yes, what indignation, yes, what fear, yes, what vehement desire, yes, what zeal, yes, what revenge! In all things you have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter. ... Therefore, ... exceedingly the more we joyed for the joy of Titus, because his spirit was refreshed by you all. For if I have boasted any thing to him of you, I am not ashamed; but as we spoke all things to you in truth, even so our boasting, which I made before Titus, is found a truth. And his inward affection is more abundant toward you, while he remembers the obedience of you all, how with fear and trembling you received him. I rejoice therefore that I have confidence in you in all things.

Paul wanted the Corinthians to have their collection ready when he got there, especially since he had told the Philippian and Thessalonian Congregations, who were giving very sacrificially, that Corinth had come up with the idea over a year ago. Paul sent 2 Corinthians to Corinth with Titus, Timothy, and Erastus, so they could get the collection ready before he came to Corinth. The Galatian and Macedonian [Phil/Thess+] representatives travelled with Paul to Corinth because Paul planned go from Corinth to Jerusalem on a Passover pilgrim ship. Paul planned to pick up the Ephesian representatives when the ship stopped in Ephesus or Miletus.

2 Cor. 8:1-7, 16-23; 9:2-5. Moreover, brethren, we want you to know of the grace of God bestowed on the Congregations of Macedonia [Phil/Thess+], how that in a great trial of affliction, ... their deep poverty abounded to the riches of their liberality. For to, ... and beyond their ability, they were willing of themselves, praying us with much entreaty that we would receive the gift, and take on us the fellowship

of the ministering to the saints. ... Inasmuch that, we desired Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also finish in you the same grace also. ... But thanks be to God, which put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you. For indeed he accepted the exhortation; but being more forward, of his own accord he went to you. And we have sent with him the brother whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the Congregations [Timothy], and ... who was also chosen of the Congregations to travel with us with this grace. ... Avoiding this, that any man should blame us [accuse them of embezzlement] in this abundance which is administered by us, providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men. And we have sent with them our brother [Erastus], whom we have oftentimes proved diligent in many things, but now much more diligent, upon the great confidence which I have in you [Erastus was from Corinth]. Whether any do enquire of Titus, he is my partner and fellow helper concerning you, or our brethren [that will be accompanying Paul from Macedonia (Phil/Thess+)] be enquired of, they are the messengers ['apostles' in Greek] of the Congregations. ... For ... I boast of you to them of Macedonia [Phil/Thess+], that Achaia [Cor+] was ready a year ago; and your zeal has motivated very many. Yet I have sent the brethren [Titus, Timothy, and Erastus], lest our boasting of you should be in vain in this behalf; that, as I said, you may be ready; lest haply if they of Macedonia [Phil/Thess+] come with me, and find you unprepared, we (that we say not, you) should be ashamed in this same confident boasting. Therefore, I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren [Titus, Timothy, and Erastus], that they would go before to you, and make up beforehand your bounty.

It was wise of Paul to provide many witnesses to accompany the offering, “that no man should blame us in this abundance [of money] which is administered by us” (2 Cor. 8:20). Paul had enough detractors and accusers in Corinth already without exposing himself to charges of embezzlement. When Paul reached Corinth, he stayed with them three months, during which time he wrote the great doctrinal letter of Romans.

Acts 20:3a. Epistle of Romans

Written at Acts 20:3a from Corinth.

Acts 20:2b-3a. [Paul] came into Greece, and stayed there three months.

Written after Acts 20:2b when the offering was collected from Macedonia [Phil/Thess+] and Corinth.

Rom. 15:26. It has pleased them of Macedonia [Phil/Thess+] and Achaia [Cor+] to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem.

Written before Acts 20:3b when Paul left Corinth to bring the offering to Jerusalem.

Rom. 15:25. Now I go to Jerusalem to minister to the saints.

Acts 20:3b-4a. When the Jews laid wait for Paul, as he was about to sail to Syria, he purposed to return through Macedonia [Phil/Thess+]. And there accompanied him into Asia [Eph+] ...

The Congregation at Rome hadn't been started by an apostle, but by people from Rome who had heard the gospel while visiting Jerusalem, and by believers from elsewhere who went to the capital of the empire for various political, business, and personal reasons over time.

Paul had never been to Rome. He told them he had heard a lot about them, and had long wanted to visit, but had been delayed by opportunities and problems in the Aegean areas he had evangelized.

Rom. 1:8-15. I thank my God through Jesus Messiah for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world [since Rome was the capital]. For God is my witness, ... that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers, making request, if by any means, now at length, I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come to you. For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift [by the laying on of his hands], to the end you may be established; that is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me. Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come to you, but was hindered up until now [by Aegean opportunities and problems that had higher priority than Rome], so that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles. I am a debtor to both the Greeks, and to the Barbarians. ... So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also.

Acts 20:3b (Corinth). 17) Make Wise Flexible Plans

As mentioned earlier, Paul's first plan in finishing his third missionary journey, was to go from Ephesus to Corinth first, so he could visit the Corinthians twice.

Plan 1). 2 Cor. 1:15-16. Ephesus > Corinth > Thessalonica > Philippi > Thessalonica > Corinth > Jerusalem > Rome > Spain

But then he changed his plans because he decided to save the Corinthians for last, because he didn't look forward to having to rebuke them.

Plan 2). 2 Cor. 1:23; Acts 19:21. Ephesus > Philippi > Thessalonica > Corinth > Jerusalem > Rome > Spain

But in the end he didn't follow plan 1 or 2. A plot to ambush him on the pilgrim ship from Corinth to Judaea for Passover forced him to retrace his steps back to Philippi, who got the "second benefit" (2 Cor. 1:15) instead of Corinth.

Plan 3). Acts 20:3. Ephesus > Philippi > Thessalonica > Corinth > Thessalonica > Philippi > Jerusalem > Rome > Spain

Paul was planning to take a Passover pilgrim ship from Corinth to Ephesus, where he would pick up Tychicus and Trophimus with the offering from Asia [Eph+], and then sail on to Jerusalem. But the Jews discovered his plans, and packed the ship with assassins posing as pilgrims, to ambush Paul on the voyage. Paul found out about it, and sent a message on the pilgrim ship, to Tychicus and Trophimus, to meet him and the others in Troas.

Acts 20:3. When the Jews laid wait for him, as he was about to sail to [Jerusalem], he purposed to return through Macedonia [Phil/Thess+].

And his plans never included arrest and imprisonment, which is what actually happened.

What Actually Happened. Acts 21:33; 24:27; 27:1; 28:16. Ephesus > Philippi > Thessalonica > Corinth > Thessalonica > Philippi > Jerusalem > Caesarean Imprisonment > Roman Imprisonment

Does this sound like someone who received direct revelation from the Spirit of God via inward impressions for all his decisions? If God was giving Paul supernatural guidance, why did he have to change his plans so often? But since God only rarely gave anyone, even to the apostle Paul, supernatural guidance for anything, even something as important as completing Jesus' mission to the Gentiles, why would he give non-apostle believers today, daily supernatural guidance as to what job they should take, or where they should find a parking space? In the book of Acts, God intervened with direct guidance only in rare cases to save Jesus' mission of Acts 1:8. Instead of listening for an inner voice or receiving any direct revelation, the apostles almost always used the Word and Wisdom to make their decisions.

Acts 20:4. The Messengers (Apostles) of the Congregations

Representatives had been appointed by the Congregations of Galatia, Macedonia [Phil/Thess+], Achaia [Cor+], and Asia [Eph+], to accompany Paul and the offering to Jerusalem.

Acts 20:4. There accompanied him into Asia [Eph+], Sopater of Berea; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and

Timothy. And of Asia [Eph+], Tychicus and Trophimus.

He didn't say, "and Gaius and Timothy of Derbe," even though Timothy was also from the area of Derbe. So Timothy may have travelled as Corinth's representative. The Corinthians may also have asked Paul to represent them, to reassure him of their love and confidence after the strain in their relationship described in 2 Corinthians.

Zahn speculates that "of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus" in Acts 20:4, could be the same as "Gaius and Aristarchus, men of Macedonia [Phil/Thess+], Paul's companions in travel" in Acts 19:29, that had been dragged into the amphitheater in Ephesus. "Companions in travel," didn't mean they had previously been so, but that they became so after the riot. He thinks 'Secundus' may be another name for 'Gaius,' that was used in Acts 20:4 because there was another Gaius in the group, "Gaius of Derbe" (Acts 20:4), because Secundus is only mentioned here in the New Testament.[52](#)

THE MESSENGERS (APOSTLES) OF THE CONGREGATIONS		
Region	Congregations	Messengers (Apostolos)
Galatia	Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe	Gaius of Derbe
Macedonia	Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea	Sopater of Berea Aristarchus of Thess.

		Secundus [Gaius?] of Thess.
Achaia	Corinth	Timothy (of Derbe)
Asia	Ephesus, Colossae, Laodicea	Tychicus of ? Trophimus of Ephesus Acts 21:29

It's interesting Luke lists the Congregations' representatives that accompanied the offering, but doesn't say anything about the offering itself in Acts, except for one passing reference later in Acts 24:17, during Paul's defense before Governor Felix in Caesarea.

Acts 24:17. Now after many years, I came to bring alms to my nation, and offerings.

But Luke wants us to focus, not on the money the Gentile Congregations sent to Jerusalem, but on the Gentile representatives themselves that they sent, all dedicated to the work of the gospel. Paul brought them to Jerusalem as a firstfruits offering of the finished work of Jesus' mission to the Aegean Gentiles. And how the Jewish Congregation in Jerusalem would respond to these Gentile brethren was more important than how they would respond to their monetary offering.

Rom. 15:16. That I would be the minister of Jesus Messiah to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

When Paul and the Galatian, Macedonia [Phil/Thess+], and Achaean [Cor+] messengers ('apostles' of the churches in

Greek, but not apostles of Jesus Messiah) were ready to board the pilgrim ship to Jerusalem, a plot was discovered to assassinate Paul on the ship, so he and the representatives went back through Macedonia. And Paul sent a message via the ship to the Asian [Eph+] representatives that he had planned to pick up in Ephesus or Miletus (near Ephesus), to meet them in Troas instead.

Acts 20:4b-5. And of Asia [Eph+], Tychicus and Trophimus; these going before tarried for us at Troas.

Acts 20:6a. Passover in Philippi

When Paul, Timothy, Gaius of Derbe, Aristarchus, Secundus (Gaius of Thessalonica?), and Sopater got to Philippi, they celebrated the Passover there with the brethren, including Luke, even though Philippi was a predominantly Gentile Congregation, since now they were too late to celebrate the Passover in Jerusalem. This showed that Paul and the Gentile Congregations celebrated Passover and Unleavened Bread (Matza) in harmony with the Jewish brethren within their Congregations. Paul then left Philippi in time to make it to Jerusalem for Pentecost.

Acts 20:6, 16. We sailed away from Philippi after the days of unleavened bread [Passover]. ... Paul had determined to sail by Ephesus, because ... he hurried, if it were possible [he didn't know for sure because God didn't guide him with direct revelation], for him to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost.

On his voyage from Caesarea to Rome, Paul also mentions Yom Kippur.

Acts 27:9. Sailing was now dangerous, because the [fall Day of Atonement] Fast was now already past [winter was beginning].

Paul, Jesus' ambassador to the Gentiles, still wore tzitzit and dressed like an observant Jew. Otherwise, the synagogue leaders in Antioch Galatia wouldn't have asked him to speak.

Acts 13:15. After the reading of the law and the prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent to them, saying, "You men and brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say on."

The Congregation in Corinth was mostly Gentile, but Paul had taught them all about the Jewish feasts, and he listed most of them in 1 and 2 Corinthians.

Passover (Pesach) and Unleavened Bread. 1 Cor. 5:7-8. Purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump [of dough], as you are unleavened. For even Messiah, our Passover [lamb], is sacrificed for us. Therefore, let's keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

Firstfruits. 1 Cor. 15:20. Now Messiah has risen from the dead, and become the Firstfruits of them that slept.

Pentecost (Shavuot). 1 Cor. 16:8. I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost.

Trumpets (Rosh Hashana). 1 Cor. 15:52. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the Last Trump [of 101 shofar blasts during the celebration of the feast], for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead

will be raised incorruptible, and we [who are still alive] will be changed.

Tabernacles (Sukkot). 2 Cor. 5:1. We know that if our earthly house of this Tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal.

The Congregation at Corinth celebrated these feasts, not because they were required to do so, since Gentiles were never under the law and Jewish brethren have been freed from the law, but because they were free to do so. Why not celebrate these feasts along with the Jewish believers of your Congregation? It will be educational, it will foster ties to reach out to the unbelieving Jewish community, and it will discourage the kind of spiritualizing and allegorizing of scripture that has led Reformed theology into so much error. How infinitely better to celebrate these biblical holidays in your Congregation, versus the pagan Roman Catholic false religious holidays and seasons, like so-called Lent etc.

No one could be around Paul without being 'Judaized,' or rather 'Jewish-ized.' That's one reason God chose him as the apostle to the Gentiles.

Phil. 3:5. Of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews.

Acts 22:3. Brought up in [Jerusalem], [taught] at the feet of Gamaliel.

Acts 23:6. Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee.

Bock. Why is [Paul] so anxious to reach Jerusalem by Pentecost? It is because he keeps the feasts.[53](#)

Acts 20:5. Luke Rejoins Paul at Philippi

Acts 20:5-6. These [the Asian (Eph+) representatives] going before tarried for us at Troas, and we sailed away from Philippi after the days of [Passover and Unleavened Bread], and came to them to Troas.

Notice the second “we” portion of Acts begins here. This is an amazing thing! Paul had not been planning to come back to Philippi on his way to Jerusalem. The Jewish plot to assassinate him on the Passover pilgrim ship from Corinth, had redirected Paul to Luke here in Philippi, just like the Spirit’s prohibition of evangelism in Ephesus and Bithynia, had redirected Paul to Luke in Troas, at the start of the second missionary journey. And once again, Luke is suddenly ready to leave his established life at a moment’s notice, and join Paul on his mission, though three months earlier when Paul went through Philippi on his way to Corinth, Luke had no intention of going with Paul and the Congregations’ representatives to Jerusalem.

Luke was a fastidious collector and organizer of historical data. For such a detail-oriented person to pick up in a moment’s notice, and go on a journey for the next five years of his life, when Paul unexpectedly passed through Philippi, because of a last minute change in plans, is amazing.

Paul had probably seen Luke as the Macedonian man in his vision at Troas, since I haven’t heard of any distinctive clothing by which you could know a man was a Macedonian in a vision, and thereby God simultaneously call both Paul to Greece, and Luke to Paul. Likewise, in Philippi, Paul had a vision which informed him he wouldn’t be returning to any

of the areas he had already evangelized, to once again both inform Paul and reenlist Luke.

Acts 20:25. I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, will see my face no more.

Now both Paul and Luke knew, that if Luke was ever going to write a history of Jesus' ministry to the Judaeans in a gospel, and to the diaspora Jews and the Gentiles through Paul in a second book, the book of Acts, he would have to leave everything and go with Paul now. Long sea voyages and imprisonments are the best times to get interviews with busy apostles, and that's what Paul and Luke's life would be like for the next five years.

Acts 20:13-14. Paul's Gethsemane

From Troas, Paul took the shorter 20 mile walk across the Troad peninsula, while the others picked him up after sailing the longer distance around the peninsula by sea. It was a pleasant road, but was he walking alone because he was thinking about how things had turned around since the peak of his success in Ephesus, and about the prophetic indications of his sufferings to come at Jerusalem. He may have been remembering how Silas, Timothy, and he had walked the same road, in the other direction, to Troas where Paul had the vision that began the ministry to Greece.

Acts 20:13-14. And we went before to ship, and sailed to Assos, there intending to take in Paul, for so had he appointed, minding [thinking/reasoning, not 'feeling led of God'] himself to go afoot. And when he met with us at Assos, we took him in.

Acts 20:15-38. Farewell Speech to the Ephesian Elders

Acts 20:15-17. And ... we came to Miletus, for Paul had determined to sail by Ephesus, because he would not spend the time [in Ephesus]: for he hurried, if it were possible [which he couldn't know since he almost never received direct revelation for guidance], for him to be at Jerusalem [to celebrate in the temple] the day of Pentecost. And from Miletus, he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the Congregation.

Paul and his company probably took a ship in Troas that planned to skip Ephesus and stop in Miletus, because they might have had to wait several more days to book a ship that planned to stop in Ephesus. Paul probably sent his message to Ephesus for the Ephesian elders to come to him by public courier on horseback. It was faster for the message to go by horseback, and the elders to walk to Paul; than for Paul and his companions to walk to Ephesus, and then walk back to Miletus.

Acts 20:18-38. And when [the elders from Ephesus] had come to him, [Paul] said to them, ... “Now, behold, I go bound in the spirit [this may be a veiled reference to a previous physical imprisonment in Asia (Eph+)] to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit witnesses in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me. But none of these things move me, neither do I count my life dear to myself, so that I can finish my race with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel. ... And now, behold, I know that you all, among whom

I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, will see my face no more. Wherefore, I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. ... Take heed therefore to yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to feed the Congregation of God, which he has purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. ... And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace. ... And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all. And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him, sorrowing most of all for the words which he spoke, that they would see his face no more. And they accompanied him to the ship.

Acts 28:1-6. Circumstances

The Word. Mt. 14:29-30. When Peter had come down out of the ship, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he ... [was] beginning to sink.

Not Wisdom. Acts 28:4-6. When the barbarians saw the venomous beast hang on his hand, they said, ... "No doubt this man is a murderer." ... But after they ... saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds, and said that he was a god.

Circumstances provide the parameters of the problem, and the background of the decision. Circumstances don't provide any information from God to provide direction that can be 'divined' from them.

Robinson. I'm reminded of the Rorschach Test, the psychological test featuring the big inkblots. ... One person may see a beautiful butterfly. Another sees, in the same blots, demons coming to claim his soul. ... The way we interpret events in our lives often reveals more about our innermost hearts than our outward circumstances. Circumstances don't provide us with the guidance we need to make good decisions. ... Paul and his physician friend, Luke, were shipwrecked. ... Paul gathered some sticks. As he put his bundle on the fire, a viper sank its fangs into the flesh of his hand. When the people of Malta saw what happened, they interpreted the circumstance in light of God's providence: "This man must be a murderer; for though he escaped from the sea, Justice has not allowed him to live" (Acts 28:4). But Paul shook off the viper into the fire, and its poison apparently had no effect. When the people saw this new set of circumstances, they completely reversed themselves. Acts tells us, "They changed their minds and said he was a god" (28:6). In both cases, these people were doing their very best to read the circumstances. And in both cases, they were wrong!⁵⁴

Applying the Word with Wisdom

Choosing Between Job Offers

The Word. 1 Tim. 5:8.)If any provide not for his own [relatives], and especially for those of his own house, he has denied the faith, and is worse than an unbeliever.

Eph. 6:2. Honor your father and mother.

Heb. 10:25. Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together.

And Wisdom. I will take the job that 1) provides enough money for me to support my family, 2) allows me the most contact with my parents and relatives, and 3) allows me to labor together in a Congregation.

Everything can be decided by the Word and Wisdom. God tells us in the Bible what his will is for you.

1 Ths. 5:16-18. Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks. For this is the will of God in Messiah Jesus concerning you.

But how should we apply the word of God to decisions that aren't directly mentioned in the Bible, like whether to accept a job offer in Alaska, for example? We need to use logic and wisdom based on the word of God.

The Bible says, "If any provide not for his own, ... he ... is worse than an unbeliever," 1 Tim. 5:8. How would my changing jobs and moving to Alaska affect my ability to

support my family and relatives? Money isn't the main goal for believers. "They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts," 1 Tim. 6:9. But, we do need to earn enough to feed our families.

The Bible says, "Honor your father and mother," Eph. 6:2. How would moving to Alaska affect the welfare of my parents and friends?

The Bible says, "We are laborers together with God," 1 Cor. 3:9. How would moving to Alaska affect me and my family's ability to worship and labor together with a local Congregation?

An ounce of weight in any of those criteria, or other direct teachings from the Bible, outweighs a thousand pounds of inward impressions, because we are not to make decisions according to feelings, though feelings can indicate we should reconfirm our understandings of the scriptures and the wisdom we're basing our decision on.

Some things in life are moral, and some things are immoral, but most things are amoral, or neutral. Jobs, in themselves, are amoral. God doesn't care whether you take a job in Alaska, or stay at the one you're at. God cares about how, whatever job you take, allows you to obey, and influence others to obey, his direct commands, like "Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks" (1 Ths. 5:16-17).

Frameworks for Discerning God's Will

Dave Swavely says we should ask three questions in order to make decisions.

Swavely. What does the Bible say about it? ... What is the wisest choice? ... What do I want to do?⁵⁵

As far as the wisest option, ...

Swavely. [The wisest option is the one that's] the most expedient or profitable spiritually, ... [that] contribute[s] to ... your spiritual life [and] the spiritual lives of others.⁵⁶

Decisions should not be based on inner impressions, as if they were direct revelation from God.

Swavely. If you declare a need for both [scripture and new revelation], you have implied the insufficiency of [scripture]. ... You should not in any way be seeking new specific or personal revelation from God. ... An interesting phenomenon occurs, "non-charismatics" end up acting just like those who believe in continuing revelation. ... Feelings, impressions, circumstances, counsel, desires, and prayer [should not be] given authority in the decision-making process. ... They are not "road signs on the highway of life."⁵⁷

Waltke provides five steps for determining God's will.

Waltke. God's Program of Guidance: 1) Read Your Bible, 2) Develop a Heart for God, 3) Seek Wise Counsel, 4) Look for God's Providence [he means watch for opportunities and make flexible plans], 5) Does This Make Sense? ... God gave each of us a brain, and He expects us to put it to good use.⁵⁸

MacArthur provides a non-impression-based model for determining God's will.

MacArthur. God's will is that you be saved, Spirit-filled, sanctified, submissive, and suffering. ... You say, "MacArthur, you were going to tell me what school I should go to. You were going to tell me God's will, specifically!" Okay, let me give you the final principle, but hold on to your seat! You may want to jump up and shout! If you are doing all five of the basic things, ... do whatever you want! ... People say to me, "Why did you go into your present ministry?" ... I always answer, "Because I wanted to."

I had a friend come to me and say, "John, I don't know where the Lord wants me to serve." I said to him, "Marty, if you had your choice of any service in the world, what would you want?" He said, "Oh, I have such a burden for my people Israel. I speak French fluently, and Paris is just loaded with Jewish people who don't know Jesus." ... I checked him on the five spiritual principles and said, "Marty, have you done all these things?" He replied, "Yes, I honestly believe [so]." I said, "Marty, good-bye, have a nice trip." ... He raised all of his support, and today he is serving Christ - in Canada! ... He is in the city of Montreal, working with French-speaking Jews.⁵⁹

Tozer. In the majority of decisions touching our earthly lives God expresses no choice, but leaves everything to our own preference. Some Christians walk under a cloud of uncertainty, worrying about which profession they should enter, which car they should drive, which school they should attend, where they should live and a dozen or score of other such matters, when their Lord has set them free to follow their own personal bent, guided only by their love for Him and for their fellow men. On the surface it appears more spiritual to seek God's leading than

just to go ahead and do the obvious thing. But it is not. If God gave you a watch would you honor Him more by asking Him for the time of day or by consulting the watch? If God gave a sailor a compass would the sailor please God more by kneeling in a frenzy of prayer to persuade God to show him which way to go or by steering according to the compass? Except for those things that are specifically commanded or forbidden, it is God's will that we be free to exercise our own intelligent choice. The shepherd will lead the sheep but he does not wish to decide which tuft of grass the sheep shall nibble each moment of the day.⁶⁰

We no longer have new revelation today, like when Paul was supernaturally directed to Macedonia [Phil/Thess+]. But even during the time of the apostles, supernatural guidance was only for the historical accomplishment of the apostolic mission, and never for personal things like what house to buy, or who to marry.

Robinson. God guided New Testament believers in personal decisions only when such decisions related to the ministry of the gospel. As far as we know, Peter didn't get any special guidance from God when he wanted to buy a house or a horse. Nor do we hear of divine guidance when it came to decisions concerning marriage. In the New Testament, God's special revelation and guidance always had to do with ministry and the moving of God in the world.⁶¹

Career Choices

Sproul says, "What do you do," meaning what is your occupation, is one of the main questions we ask people when we meet them.⁶² He says God is introduced in

Genesis 1 as a working God, and he created man to be a working creature, and assigned him to keep the garden, and labor even before the fall.⁶³ We spend so much of our lives preparing for a career and working, and it affects our lives so much that “vocational counseling is a major part of pastoral counseling in America, second only to marital counseling.”⁶⁴

Sproul says we should usually try to fill a need in an occupational area we have aptitudes and talents for, that we are also motivated about and want to pursue, so long as we don't violate God's will as revealed in his commandments.⁶⁵ He also admonishes us to order our priorities and examine potential consequences. When Abraham and his nephew Lot had to separate because of the shortage of available pasture land, Lot chose Sodom as his portion.

Sproul. [Lot] didn't ask himself, “Where will my family go to school? Where will my family go to church?” The city he chose was Sodom - a great place to raise cows. The short-term consequences were fine, but long-term living in Sodom turned out to be a disaster in many ways. How will our job decisions be conducive to fulfilling our other responsibilities? The person who chooses a vocation purely on the basis of money, location [like a warm climate], or status is virtually guaranteeing his later frustration. Much of the confusion we often experience in the job arena would be dispelled by asking ourselves ... “What would I like to be doing ten years from now?”⁶⁶

Marriage Choices

Another of life's biggest choices is, should I marry, and if so, whom should I marry? In 1 Corinthians 7, Paul said it's better not to marry if you want to serve God without distraction and are strong enough to avoid fornication; but he also said it's good to marry if you want to, and that marriage is not optional if you need to marry to avoid fornication.

As for deciding whom to marry, Sproul said it might help to make a list of the ideal qualities you're looking for and then reduce the list to the most important priorities. "Compatibility with work and with play, attitudes toward parenting, and certain skills and physical characteristics could be included," while realizing no one will ever fit the list perfectly.⁶⁷

He also advised council from others who can see prospects without rose-colored glasses, a role matchmakers used to fill. For example, "a man with a profound need to be mothered and a woman with a profound need to mother, can be attracted to each other in a mutually destructive way."⁶⁸ He said, "I am convinced that if biblical precepts are applied consistently, virtually any two people in the world can build a happy marriage."⁶⁹ Of course, that doesn't mean it will be equally easy with any prospective spouse.

As far as when to get married, "a man shall leave his father and mother and [hold fast to] his wife" (Gen. 2:24) indicates "the concept of being able to establish a new family unit. Here, economic realities often govern the preparedness for marriage."⁷⁰ To find one's spouse, Sproul mentioned the need to be involved in activities that will bring them into contact with other single believers.⁷¹ I would add online dating sites to be a great way to search for people based on their words and character descriptions, rather than just

appearance by 'swiping' left or right, with care being taken to avoid misrepresentations and the internet's unique potential dangers.

The Bible provides men a list of what to look for in a prospective spouse in Proverbs 31. The ideal woman described there is virtuous, faithful, diligent, financially shrewd, strong, kind, artistic, sociable, godly, and more. The woman who best fulfills all those characteristics is the best woman for every man in the world, though only one will be able to marry her.

Solomon summarizes, ...

Prov. 31:30-31. Favor [charm, attraction, whether the other person likes me] is deceitful, and beauty is empty; but a woman that fears the Lord, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates [society]

The Bible says less about who to marry, than about how to treat your spouse, whoever you marry.

Eph. 5:22-25. Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Messiah is the head of the Congregation. ... Husbands, love your wives, even as Messiah also loved the Congregation, and gave himself for it.

But that also tells you what to look for in a spouse. Look for a spouse who will do their job, so it will be easier for you to do your job. A woman should look for man who will unselfishly love her; a kind, loving, wise man, who will be committed to her, because being greatly loved will make it easier for her to submit to him, even during times when he makes poor decisions. A man should look for a woman who

will submit to him, despite his shortcomings, out of her submission to Messiah, because that will make it easier for him to sacrificially love her, taking responsibility for her welfare, and being gracious.

You will have to continue doing your part unconditionally, whether your spouse continues to do their part or not. But while you're still free to choose, choose someone who won't make it more difficult for you to do your part. Their character is the most important indication of how they will behave long term, and you can learn more about their character by how they treat their family, and the waitress, than by how they treat someone they're trying to woo.

I think 2 Corinthians 6:14-15, "Don't be unequally yoked together with unbelievers," primarily forbids ecumenicism, religious affiliation, and co-labor with unbelievers; rather than marriage to an unbeliever. "A man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they shall be one flesh" (Gen. 2:24), indicates spouses become "one flesh," not "one spirit." As I learned from studying old Puritan sermons for a history paper, marriage concerns the things of this life, one flesh not one spirit, which is why we don't remain married after the resurrection (Mt. 22:30).

So it's not a sin to marry an unbeliever. But life will be more difficult for a believer if they marry an unbeliever, so there would have to be a good reason for it, like if the woman is pregnant, as one example. But a believer must never divorce a spouse just because they're an unbeliever. "If any brother has a wife that doesn't believe, ... don't divorce her," 1 Cor. 7:12.

Also, I think any man who is willing to commit to a woman, and will be a loving leader, can find a good wife; but there is a great shortage of men capable of being good husbands,

because of the self-centeredness of modern culture. Men have the more critical role, “love your wives, even as Messiah also loved the Congregation, and gave himself for it” (Eph. 5:25), so their failure will affect the marriage more than any failures of the wife.

Wives are at greater risk from physical, verbal, and psychological abusive from critical, ungracious husbands; than husbands are at risk from character flaws, like laziness or overemphasis on fashion, a wife may have. Women generally are naturally more conscientious and inclined to adjust to their husbands, but for a wife to try to change her husband is a recipe for disaster. “Wives, be in subjection to your own husbands, so that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won, while they behold your chaste behavior [not speech],” 1 Pet. 3:1.

The man is the one that must hold the marriage together, and if he lets go, the relationship will not survive. “A man shall ... cleave to his wife, and they shall be one flesh” (Gen. 2:24). Wives will usually stay in the marriage, and follow the man, as long as he leads in love, and holds onto the relationship. Few women would leave a man who would climb mountains and swim oceans for her. Men desire women; women desire to be desired.

In any case, applying the Word with Wisdom is the biblical method of making decisions in this, as in all areas; not by following supposed signs or inward impressions as if they were guidance.

Conclusion

The Book of Acts shows the Apostles and the early brethren made their decisions based on the Word and Wisdom, not on inward impressions.

The Word included both previous revelation, like the Old Testament, things Jesus had said, and New Testament revelation each person might have had access to, like an epistle from Paul; and also, rarely, direct revelation for the immediate situation, but it was genuine! Merely supposed direct revelation doesn't count as the Word.

When Bible teachers keep telling the brethren they ought to be having direct revelation, and performing miracles, like we read about in the Bible, then it's not unexpected that such pressures will cause over-sensitive people with a great desire to obey God to mistake their own inward impressions for direct revelation, even though they actually fall far short of the truly miraculous, as found in the Bible.

As shown in the table below, direct revelation was extremely rare, even for the apostle Paul, when he was serving God at the forefront of the mission to bring the gospel from Judea to the uttermost parts of the earth, the story of Acts 9-28. Instead of receiving direct revelation, almost all Paul's decisions in those 20 chapters can be explained by 17 wise principles. He didn't even have to 'pray about it' before making them, because in most cases the next step was obvious, although I'm sure he prayed about everything that worried him.

PAUL'S 17 MISSION STRATEGIES

1. Go!
2. Work with Others

3. Start At Home
4. To the Jew First
5. On-the-Job Training
6. New Territory
7. Contiguous Territory
8. Focus On Cities
9. Flee Persecution
10. Preach!
11. Defense Before Offense
12. Plant Congregations
13. Keep in Touch
14. Baptize!
15. Meet With the Brethren
16. Teach!
17. Make Wise Flexible Plans

Of Paul's 94 decisions listed below from Acts 9-20, only 7 were based on direct revelation, none of which were by inward impressions or voices for the daily decisions of life. One involved seeing the resurrected, physical, glorified Jesus; two involved seeing Jesus in a vision; one involved genuine prophecy from a genuine prophet; one involved being filled with the Spirit; and one involved both prophecy from a prophet and seeing a vision, and one involved the Spirit directly causing him to make a certain decision.

Direct Revelation 1) Paul's Calling. Seeing the Resurrected Jesus. Paul saw the physical, glorified Jesus who told him to go to Ananias in Damascus. Paul needed this direct revelation to appoint him as Jesus' representative to bring the gospel to the Aegean. Do you honestly have daily experiences like the following?

Acts 9:6, 10. As I ... came near to Damascus about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me, and I fell to the ground. ... And

the Lord said to me, "Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it will be told you of all the things which are appointed for you to do."

1 Cor. 15:8. Last of all, he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.

Direct Revelation 2) Paul's Training. Seeing Jesus in a Vision. Jesus preserved Paul's life, by sending him to his hometown of Tarsus for training and growth until he was ready to begin his mission.

Acts 9:29-30. The [Hellenistic Jews] ... went about to slay him, which when the brethren knew, they ... sent him away to Tarsus.

Acts 22:17-18. While I prayed in the temple, I was in a trance, and saw him saying to me, "Make haste, and get quickly out of Jerusalem, for they won't receive your testimony concerning me.

Direct Revelation 3) Paul's Start. Genuine Prophecy from a Genuine Prophet. Paul and Barnabas were sent to Cyprus by the genuine prophecy of a genuine prophet. Paul needed this direct revelation to begin the historical mission of bringing the gospel to the Aegean for Jesus, because the unresolved question of how Gentiles fit into the Jewish Congregation, prevented him from starting.

Acts 13:1-4. There were in the Congregation that was at Antioch certain prophets. ... As they ... fasted, the Holy Spirit said [by contextual implication via one of the aforementioned prophets], "Separate to me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereto I have called them." ... And when they had ... laid their hands on them, ... they, being sent forth by the Holy Spirit, ... sailed to Cyprus.

Direct Revelation 4) Paul's Assumption of Leadership. Being Filled with the Spirit. Paul temporarily blinded a sorcerer when filled with the Spirit. He needed this filling so he could overcome a sorcerer's opposition to the gospel, and so he could begin leading the team to fulfill the one-time mission of bringing the gospel to the Aegean for Jesus.

Acts 13:9-14. Then Saul, ... called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, ... said, ... "You will be blind, not seeing the sun for a season." ... Now when Paul and his company loosed from Paphos, ... they came to Antioch [Galatia], ... and went into the synagogue on the sabbath day.

Direct Revelation 5) Corinth Before Ephesus. Prophecy and a Vision. The Spirit forbid Paul to go to Ephesus, probably through a prophecy, perhaps by Silas, who was a prophet (Acts 13:1; 15:32). Only a few believers in the early Congregation were prophets (1 Cor. 12\29; Eph. 2:20). And Paul saw a vision of a Macedonian asking for help. Jesus knew it would be better for Paul to go to Corinth before Ephesus, in violation of the normal wise principle of going into Contiguous Territory.

Perhaps Ephesus was too dangerous at that time. And the ministry there would be more effective with the help of Aquila and Priscilla (Acts 18:2, 18-19), Sosthenes (Acts 18:17; 1 Cor. 1:1 written from Ephesus), Erastus (Rom. 16:23; Acts 19:22), and others Paul met in Corinth. And perhaps Paul needed more experience, like at Corinth, before tackling his greatest challenge and crowning achievement, the evangelization of the region of Ephesus. Paul needed this direct revelation to avoid premature persecution, and to speed the completion of his historical mission to bring the gospel to the Aegean for Jesus.

Acts 16:6-9. When they ... were forbidden of the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia [Eph+], ... they ... came down to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night, ... a man ... saying, "Come over to Macedonia [Phil/Thess+] and help us.

Direct Revelation 6) Focus on Corinth and Ephesus. Seeing Jesus in a Vision Again. Jesus appeared to Paul in a vision telling him to focus on Corinth, even if there's persecution. Paul needed this direct revelation to get him to change his usual method of establishing Congregations in an area, and then moving on to new unevangelized territory.

Acts 18:9-11. Then the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision, "Be not afraid, ... for ... no man will set on you to hurt you, for I have many people in this city. And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

Direct Revelation 7) Close the Aegean Ministry and Go Up to Jerusalem. I capitalize "Spirit" in the following verse, unlike most versions, which imply Paul purposed in his own spirit.

Acts 19:21. After these things were ended, Paul purposed in the Spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia [Phil/Thess+] and Achaia [Cor+], to go to Jerusalem, saying, "After I have been there, I must also see Rome.

Paul made his decision purely on the logical application of sound principles because of his love for men and desire to serve God. He recognized the Congregations in Corinth and Ephesus were mature, the principle of Defense before Offense had been satisfied, and so it was time to apply the principles of New and Contiguous Territory. That was the

only basis of his decision, not any kind of guidance. But at the same time, Paul also recognized that God was making sure he made that decision as he did, for the accomplishment of God's purpose, specifically, in this case, for Paul to begin his passion, like Jesus began his passion, by going up to Jerusalem.

Paul also received three cases of direct revelation to help and encourage him through his passion (Acts 19:21-28:31) in the one-time, historical mission of his filling up the sufferings of Messiah as his special representative.

1) Paul went bound in the Spirit towards Jerusalem and the certainty of suffering and imprisonment.

Acts 20:22-24. And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will befall me there, except that the Holy Spirit witnesses in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me. But none of these things move me, neither do I count my life dear to myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify of the gospel of the grace of God.

2) Paul was reassured he would reach Rome and testify there.

Acts 23:11. The following night the Lord stood by him, and said, "Be of good cheer, Paul; for as you have testified of me in Jerusalem, so you must bear witness also at Rome."

3) Paul was reassured he and his shipmates would survive.

Acts 27:21-31. Paul ... said, ... "There will be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship. For

there stood by me this night the angel of God, ... saying, 'Fear not, Paul. You must be brought before Caesar, and, lo, God has given you all them that sail with you.' ... However, we must be cast on a certain island." ... And as the sailors were about to flee out of the ship, when they had let down the boat into the sea, ... Paul said to the centurion, ... "Unless these remain in the ship, you can't be saved."

Two places in Acts the Spirit guided by 'saying' something to someone, the way the Spirit sometimes spoke to prophets, but these prophets also did other miraculous things, in ways very unlike the popular concept of all believers receiving daily guidance by an inner voice.

1) The Spirit Spoke to Philip to Evangelize the Ethiopian Official. But Philip was one of the first seven deacons, who was also filled with the Spirit, did many miracles, was visited by an angel, ran with supernatural speed like Elijah, and experienced Star Trek style teleportation.

Acts 8:6-7. The people ... [were] hearing and seeing the miracles which [Philip] did. For unclean spirits, ... came out of many, ... and many ... that were lame, were healed.

1 Kgs. 18:44-46. [Elijah] said, ... "Say to Ahab, 'Prepare your chariot, and get down so that the rain doesn't stop you.'" ... And Ahab rode, and went to Jezreel. And the hand of the Lord was on Elijah, and he girded up his loins, and ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel.

Acts 8:26-40. And the angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, saying, "Arise, and go toward the south to the way that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." ... And,

behold, ... a eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who ... had come to Jerusalem to worship, was returning. ... Then the Spirit said to Philip, "Go near, and join yourself to this chariot." And Philip ran there to him, and heard him read the prophet Isaiah. ... And [Philip] baptized him. And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, so that the eunuch saw him no more, and he went on his way rejoicing. But Philip was found at Azotus.

2) The Spirit Spoke to Peter to Open the Door of the Congregation to Gentiles.

Acts 10:19. While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Behold, three men seek you."

But Peter was a prophet and an apostle, and the purpose of the Spirit speaking to him was to open the door of faith to the Gentiles in a one-time historical event, without which, the whole purpose of Jesus in the book of Acts would have failed. And in the same incident, Cornelius sent three men a days journey to the address given to him by an angel he saw in a vision; and Peter fell into a long trance, saw heaven opened in a vision, heard a divine voice, and was told to go down just as the men who were sent the day before arrived at his door.

Even though he was the special representative of Jesus on the cutting edge of the mission of Acts, the vast majority of Paul's decisions, and of the other apostles and brethren in Acts, were made without the aid of any direct revelation.

Acts 1:23. They appointed two [not, "were led to appoint" either one, or they wouldn't have flipped a coin afterwards], Joseph ... and Matthias.

Acts 6:3-5. Brethren, you [not the Spirit] look out from among you seven men of honest report [not “that feel called”], full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom. ... And the saying pleased [not, “was recognized as the Word of the Lord by”] the whole multitude, and they [not the Spirit] chose Stephen, [etc.]

Acts 11:29. Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, [not, “as he was led to,”] determined [not, “felt led to”] to send relief to the brethren which dwelt in Judaea.

Acts 12:11-12. When Peter came to himself, ... and when he had [not “prayed about it,” but] thought about the thing, he came to the house of Mary, ... where many were gathered together praying.

Acts 15:2. They [not, “felt led to,” but] appointed that Paul and Barnabas, and certain others of them, should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders about this question [not “prayed that God would tell them the answer”].

Acts 15:22-25. Then [not “it was revealed to,” but] it pleased the apostles and elders with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. ... And they wrote letters by them after this manner, ... “It seemed good to us, [not, ‘God led us,’]... to send chosen men to you.”

Acts 15:37-38. Barnabas [not, “was led to,” but] planned to take with them John, whose surname was Mark. But Paul [not “had a word from the Lord,” but] thought it not good to take him with them, who departed from them, ... and went not with them to

the work. ... So Barnabas [not, “was led to take,” but] took Mark, and sailed to Cyprus; and Paul [not “was led to choose,” but] chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren [who recommended Paul instead of Barnabas not because they felt the Spirit lead them to but because they knew Paul was an apostle of Jesus Messiah through previous revelation].

Acts 20:3. And when the Jews laid wait for him, as he was about to sail to Syria, he [not “felt led to,” but] decided to return through Macedonia.

Acts 20:16. Paul had [not “been led,” but] decided to sail by Ephesus, because he would not spend the time in Asia [Eph+]: for he hasted, if it were possible for him [he didn’t know if it would be possible, because he didn’t receive direct revelation from God to make his decisions], to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost.

Rom. 1:13. Oftentimes I purposed [not “felt like God was leading me,”] to come to you, but was hindered [because his decisions were almost never guided by direct revelation].

1 Cor. 16:3-7. When I come [for my 2nd visit], whomever you’ll approve [not, “whomever God leads you to approve”] by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality to Jerusalem. And [not, “if God directs,”] but if it be appropriate that I go also, they will go with me. ... And it may be [he doesn’t know because God very rarely directed even him, the apostle of Jesus Messiah] that I will abide, yes, and winter with you, so that you may bring me on my journey wherever I go [not ‘wherever God will tell

me to go']. For ... I hope [he didn't know God's will for specific decision making] to tarry a while with you, if the Lord permit.

1 Cor. 16:12. As touching our brother Apollos, I greatly desired [not "God spoke to me for"] him to come to you, ... but his [Apollos'] will [God didn't provide guidance to the brethren for these kinds of decisions] was not at all to come at this time, but he will come [not "when God leads him to," but] when he will have a convenient time. [There wouldn't be differences of opinion if God led in these kinds of matters.]

2 Cor. 9:6-7. This I say, "He ... which sows bountifully, will also reap bountifully [so let this logic be the basis of your decision to give]." Every man according as he purposes in his heart [not, "as he is led"], so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity.

2 Cor. 15:23. I call God for a record on my soul, that to spare you I came not as yet to Corinth [not, "because God led me not to come yet"]. ... I determined this with myself [not, "felt led"], that I would not come again to you in heaviness.

2 Cor. 8:18-19. We have sent with him the brother, ... who was also chosen by the churches [not "chosen by God"] to travel with us.

Titus 3:12. When I shall send Artemas to you, or Tychicus [God hadn't and wouldn't ever tell him which one to send], be diligent to come to me to Nicopolis, for I have decided [not "I felt led"] to winter there.

It's true that "the steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord" (Ps. 37:23), regardless of what we decided and why, but that's totally different from our modern concept of making a decision based on the Spirit's leading by a still, small voice. As the apostle of Messiah, Paul knew Messiah would cause him to make the right plans to accomplish Jesus' purposes. But that doesn't mean Messiah told him what to decide. The very few times Paul needed directed in ways that contradicted his normal principles, God provided direction to accomplish the one-time historical mission of Acts.

2 Cor. 1:15-20. In this confidence [of their obedience] I planned [not "was led"] to come to you before, so that you might have a second benefit, and to pass by you into Macedonia [Phil/Thess+], and to come again out of Macedonia [Phil/Thess+] to you, and of you to be brought on my way toward Judaea. When I therefore thus planned, did I use lightness? Or the things that I plan, do I plan according to the flesh, so that with me there should be yes, yes, and no, no? But as God is true, our word toward you was not yes and no. For the Son of God, Jesus Messiah, who was preached among you by us, even by me and Silas and Timothy, was not yes and no, but in him was yes. For all the promises of God in him are yes, and in him, amen, to the glory of God by us.

Maybe you think you need to see angels, and visions, and even the resurrected Jesus, to feel worthwhile and important. If that's the case, it will be difficult for you to consider that even the few cases of supernatural guidance in Acts were not normative for all believers in all times. But for most of us who have simply been misled by popular teachers, who say we should make decisions moment by moment according to a still, small, inner voice, I hope you

can see that's not at all like the rare direct revelation even the apostles and prophets received.

Scripture is our only authority. I hope you've been able to acknowledge the biblical model for decision-making in the book of Acts, and rejoice to be free of arbitrarily trying to figure out what the supposed 'Spirit' is supposedly saying, versus what our own thoughts are, and that you can appreciate how truly exciting it is to make truly spiritual and supernaturally-influenced - meaning, contrary to this evil world - decisions, by applying the Word by Wisdom.

PAUL'S DECISIONS IN ACTS 9 - 28 (1)			
Decision			Basis
1	1	9:8 Called to be Jesus' apostle and went into Damascus to be met by Ananias	1 - DIRECT REVELATION (via resurrected, returned Jesus)
	2	9:20 Preached in the synagogues	PREACH THE GOSPEL
	3	9:25 Fled Damascus	FLY PERSECUTION
	4	9:26 Went to Jerusalem	WORK WITH OTHERS
	5	9:29 Disputed Hellenized Jews	PREACH THE GOSPEL
2	6	9:30 Fled Jerusalem and went to Tarsus for divine training, spiritual growth and prep	2 - DIRECT REVELATION (via vision of Jesus) FLY PERSECUTION
	7	11:26 Went to Antioch Syria to minister	WORK WITH OTHERS
	8	11:30 Delivered the offering to Jerusalem	WORK WITH OTHERS
	9	12:25 Returned to	WORK WITH

		Antioch Syria with Mark	OTHERS
3	10	13:4 Started his missionary journeys.	3 - DIRECT REVELATION (via a prophet)
	11	To Cyprus with Barnabas	WORK WITH OTHERS START AT HOME
	12	13:5 Preached in synagogues	TO THE JEW FIRST
	13	13:5 Added Mark to team	ON THE JOB TRAINING
4	14	13:11 Neutralized Elymas and took leadership of the mission	4 - DIRECT REVELATION (via filled with Spirit)
	15	13:13-14 Went to Antioch Galatia	CONTIG. TERRITORY FOCUS ON CITIES
	16	13:16 Preached in the synagogue	TO THE JEW FIRST
	17	13:51 Went to Iconium	FLEE PERSECUTION FOCUS ON CITIES
	18	14:1 Preached in the synagogue	TO THE JEW FIRST
	19	14:6 Went to Lystra	FLEE PERSECUTION FOCUS ON CITIES
	20	14:7 Preached at Lystra	PREACH THE GOSPEL

PAUL'S DECISIONS IN ACTS 9 - 28 (2)			
Decision			Basis
	21	14:20 Went to Derbe	FLEE PERSECUTION FOCUS ON CITIES
	22	14:21 Preached at Derbe	PREACH THE GOSPEL
	23	14:21 Went to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch Galatia	DEFENSE BEFORE OFFENSE
	24	14:24 Went to Perga	FOCUS ON CITIES
	25	14:25 Preached at Perga	PREACH THE GOSPEL
	26	15:2 Went to Jerusalem council	WORK WITH OTHERS
	27	15:12 Let Barnabas lead	WORK WITH OTHERS
	28	15:22 Returned to Antioch Syria with Silas	WORK WITH OTHERS
	29	15:36 Started second missionary journey	DEFENSE BEFORE OFFENSE
	30	15:38 Refused to take Mark	ON THE JOB TRAINING
	31	16:1 Added Timothy to team	ON THE JOB TRAINING
	32	16:3 Had Timothy circumcised	ALL THINGS TO ALL MEN
	33	16:4 Delivered the Jerusalem council decrees	DEFENSE BEFORE OFFENSE
5	34	16:6-7 Corinth before Ephesus	5 - DIRECT REVELATION (via vision to violate contiguous territory)
	35	16:12 Went to Philippi	FOCUS ON CITIES
	36	16:13 Preached in 'synagogue'	TO THE JEW FIRST
	37	16:15 Stayed at Lydia's house	MEET WITH THE BRETHREN

38	16:33 Baptized jailer / household	BAPTIZING THEM
39	16:37 Refused offered release to help the Congregation gain government protection	FLEE PERSECUTION (avoid the need for the other brethren to flee)
40	16:40 Left Philippi	FLEE PERSECUTION
41	17:1 Went to Thessalonica	FOCUS ON CITIES
42	17:2 Preached in the synagogue	TO THE JEW FIRST
43	17:10 Went to Berea	FLEE PERSECUTION FOCUS ON CITIES

PAUL'S DECISIONS IN ACTS 9 - 28 (3)

Decision		Basis
44	17:11 Preached in the synagogue	TO THE JEW FIRST
45	17:14 Left Berea	FLEE PERSECUTION
46	17:14 Left Silas and Timothy at Berea	TEACHING THEM
47	17:15 Went to Athens	FOCUS ON CITIES
48	17:16 Called to Silas and Timothy	WORK WITH OTHERS
49	17:17 Preached in the synagogue	TO THE JEW FIRST
50	17:17 Preached in marketplace	PREACH THE GOSPEL
51	17:22 Preached in the Areopagus	PREACH THE GOSPEL
52	18:1 Left Athens	Wasn't very fruitful
53	18:1 Went to Corinth	FOCUS ON CITIES
54	18:2 Lived with Aquila / Priscilla	WORK WITH OTHERS

	55	18:4 Preached in the synagogue	TO THE JEW FIRST
6	56	18:11 Stayed a year and a half	6 - DIRECT REVELATION (vision to stay in Corinth)
	57	18:18 Stayed a good while longer	FLEE PERSECUTION (lack of need to)
	58	18:18 Sailed for Syria with Priscilla and Aquila	STAY IN CONTACT WORK WITH OTHERS
	59	18:19 Left Priscilla + Aquila in Eph. to lay ministry groundwork	WORK WITH OTHERS
	60	18:19 Preached in the synagogue	TO THE JEW FIRST
	61	18:21 Left for feast at Jerusalem	TO THE JEW FIRST
	62	18:22 Visited the Congregation at Caesarea	TEACHING THEM
	63	18:22 Went to feast in Jerusalem	TO THE JEW FIRST
	64	18:23 Spent time in Antioch Syria	STAY IN CONTACT
	65	18:23 Went over all Galatia etc.	DEFENSE BEFORE OFFENSE
	66	19:1 Went to Ephesus	CONTIG. TERRITORY FOCUS ON CITIES
	67	19:8 Preached in synagogue	TO THE JEW FIRST
PAUL'S DECISIONS IN ACTS 9 - 28 (4)			
Decision			Basis
	68	19:9 Preached in school of Tyrannus	PREACH THE GOSPEL

7	69	19:21 Decided to close the Aegean ministry and go up to Jer.	7 - DIRECT REVELATION (Spirt-influenced)
	70	19:21 Decided to go Ephesus > Phil/Thess> Corinth > Jer. > Rome	MAKE WISE FLEXIBLE PLANS
	71	19:22 Sent Timothy and Erastus to Macedonia [Phil/Thess+]	WORK WITH OTHERS
	72	20:1 Left Ephesus	FLEE PERSECUTION
	73	20:2 Taught throughout Macedonia [Phil/Thess+]	TEACHING THEM
	74	20:2 Preached in Iconium?	CONTIGUOUS TERRITORY
	75	20:3 Taught in Corinth 3 months	TEACHING THEM
	76	20:3 Changed plans to Ephesus > Macedonia [Phil/Thess+] > Corinth > Philippi/Thessalonica > Jerusalem > Rome	FLEE PERSECUTION MAKE WISE FLEXIBLE PLANS
	77	20:7 Taught at Troas	TEACHING THEM
	78	20:16 Sailed by Ephesus to get to Jerusalem by Pentecost	TO THE JEW FIRST
	79	20:17 Taught at Miletus	TEACHING THEM
		20:22 Going bound in the Spirit to Jerusalem	NON-GUIDANCE DIRECT REVELATION
		20:23 Warned of suffering in Jerusalem	NON-GUIDANCE DIRECT REVELATION
		20:25 Know that will never return to Ephesus	NON-GUIDANCE DIRECT REVELATION

80	21:4 Stayed at Tyre seven days	MEET WITH THE BRETHREN
	21:4 Disciples said through Spirit Paul shouldn't go to Jerusalem	NON-GUIDANCE DIRECT REVELATION
81	21:7 Stayed with the brethren at Ptolemais one day	MEET WITH THE BRETHREN

PAUL'S DECISIONS IN ACTS 9 - 28 (5)		
Decision		Basis
82	21:8 Stayed at Philip's in Caesarea many days	MEET WITH THE BRETHREN
	21:11 Warned of suffering in Jerusalem	NON-GUIDANCE DIRECT REVELATION
83	21:16 Lodged with Mnason in Jerusalem	MEET WITH THE BRETHREN
84	21:19 Reported to elders in Jerusalem	KEEP IN TOUCH
85	21:26 Purified himself with four others	TO THE JEW FIRST
86	21:40 Preached in the temple court	PREACH THE GOSPEL
	21:11 Jesus promised him he would reach Rome	NON-GUIDANCE DIRECT REVELATION
87	23:6 Announced resurrection to divide Sadducees and Pharisees	FLEE PERSECUTION
88	25:11 Appealed to Caesar	FLEE PERSECUTION
89	27:10 Warned centurion of shipwreck	Sailing experience (2 Cor. 11:25)
	27:23 Reassured by an angel	NON-GUIDANCE DIRECT

			REVELATION
8	91	27:31 Warned centurion about sailors trying to flee	8 - DIRECT REVELATION (for a specific situation)
		27:34 Encouraged shipmates to eat	NON-GUIDANCE DIRECT REVELATION
	92	28:17, 23 Called for the Jewish rulers and preached to them	TO THE JEW FIRST
	93	28:26 Pronounced judgment on the Jews	TO THE JEW FIRST
	94	28:30 Preached to all who came to him	PREACH THE GOSPEL

The following excerpt is from the SLV, "Spirit-Led Version," as it might have been written if the apostles had made their decisions the way modern teachers say we should. Doesn't it sound something like how most Bible teachers today say we should make our decisions? But does it sound like Acts?

Acts 13 - 16. Spirit-Led Version. Now there were in the Congregation at Antioch certain prophets and teachers, including Barnabas and Saul. Paul felt called to take the gospel to Persia, but Barnabas had a burden for the people of his home island of Cyprus. So they prayed about it until Paul had a peace about going to Cyprus with Barnabas.

When they arrived at Salamis on Cyprus, they prayed, "Lord, do you want us to start a singles ministry here?" Barnabas said, "I distinctly felt I heard God say in my heart, "People in Paphos need God." So they went to Paphos, but a sorcerer named Barjesus convinced the deputy, Sergius Paulus, to expel them from Cyprus.

When they came to the mainland, they asked God, "Please show us if you want us to go to Antioch Galatia or to Ephesus." Paul said, "The Lord just brought to my memory, the passage I was reading in my devotions this morning. Exodus 28:28, 'Bind the breastplate by it's rings to the rings of the ephod with a lace of blue, so that it will be above the curious girdle of the ephod, and so that the breastplate can't be loosed from the ephod.' See? Eph-od, Eph-es-us!" At the same time, a vender came by shouting, "Get your silver images of Diana here!" which confirmed in Paul and Barnabas' mind that the Lord had called them to Ephesus where the false goddess Diana was worshipped.

When they got near Ephesus, the bridge had been washed out, so they took that as a closed door regarding Ephesus. Paul told Barnabas he felt impressed to go towards Philippi, but he also felt impressed to go towards Bithynia. At Antioch Syria, in their men's Bible studies, they had been studying Dallas Willard's highly recommended book, *Hearing God: Developing a Conversational Relationship with God*.

Barnabas quizzed Paul according to Willard's subjective criteria. 1) Which impression of the two had a certain steady and calm force? 2) Which inclined your soul toward compliance? 3) Did either argue, or try to convince you, or bully you? 4) Which one had the feel of the voice of God in it? 5) Did either one have a sweet reasonableness of goodwill? 5) Which one was something the devil would never say?

Paul responded, “Well the impression to go towards Philippi had a sweet reasonableness of goodwill about it, but it felt a bit like bullying. On the other hand, the impression to go towards Bithynia had the feel of the voice of God in it, but it didn’t have a steady, calm force. By that time, they realized they’d forgotten to bring their Roman Citizenship cards with them, so they returned to Antioch Syria.

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